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Learning to Write in (Networked) Public:
Children and the Delivery of Writing Online

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Learning to Write in (Networked) Public:
Children and the Delivery of Writing Online

by

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Dedication

In honor of my parents, Dr. and Mrs. Alan Price:
May all children be looked upon with such grace.
May all writers feel so encouraged.

And with gratitude for my Mike, Siobhan, and Avon:
You are the prize.

Prizes

My children chase seagulls along the sand,
pigeons the length of the park. They sneak up
behind the bird, their eyes gleaming,
their faces bold as spring.

I wonder what I would do if they caught
one of those things, their small fingers
enfolding the soft belly of the bird
as they carried it to me like a prize

saying, “Daddy, look what we’ve done.
Daddy, can we bring it home?”
What choice would there be? That thing
is dirty, perhaps diseased; the beak sharp,

and the bird did not want to be caught.
but the birds flutter out of reach before
the children even feel feathers. My smile
becomes so fatherly it frightens me.

I buy some peanuts from the vendor in the park,
tear the bag open with my teeth, divide
them among my children. “Here,” I say,
“I loved these when I was a kid.”

They look at me, puzzled,
take the peanuts and when they think
I’m not watching, toss them to the pigeons,
their eyes gleaming, their faces bold as spring.

~ Michael S. Glaser (1989)

Acknowledgements

The amount of power exercised varies not according to the power someone has, but to the number of other people who enter into the composition.
(Latour, 1996a, p. 265)

There was a time before this dissertation when I trusted in hard work to deliver me. Effort felt so fetching. So satisfying. But writing this dissertation and adopting two babies in the process changed my mind and my heart. These things could not be delivered through my effort alone, but only through the grace of others: my patient husband and our devoted parents; my sweet children and their extraordinary birthparents; my dear friends and thoughtful writing partners; my esteemed professors and enthusiastic preservice teachers; and, of course, the generous children and parents whose trust in others led me the whole way. I thank you all so much. You've taught me more than I ever could have imagined.

Learning to Write in (Networked) Public:
Children and the Delivery of Writing Online

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

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This investigation explored how three children (together with parents) developed networked publics that were diverse, well-connected, and powerful in the world. It was framed in response to calls in the field to better understand the new literacies young writers develop online and outside of school, and to increase literacy educators' attention to the role of public audiences in writing and how writing is circulated.

Performative case study methodology, ethnographic methods, and digital methods were employed to track and describe the online networks of three children (ages 11-13). These focal children were actively involved with their parents in social media, and had developed widespread networks with shared interests in children's books and book reviews (Case 1), baseball (Case 2), and helping the homeless (Case 3). The children's online networks were conceptualized as *networked publics*, drawing on Warner's (2002) notion of publics as ongoing discursive relations among strangers, and on Actor-Network Theory's notion of networks as assemblages of diverse interests that mobilize toward a common goal (Callon, 1986) and that develop stability in relation to ongoing circulations of texts (Latour, 1986; Spinuzzi, 2008). Research questions were framed broadly around the rhetorical canon of delivery [now digital delivery (Porter, 2009)], and were concerned with how writers distributed texts online, how those texts circulated, how the networked publics become more stable and powerful, and what instabilities children and parents had to negotiate in order to accomplish all of this. Data sources included interviews with 15 children and 28 adults, and fieldnotes observations of approximately 1,700 screen-captured webpages and other online artifacts.

Findings showed that the young writers and their parents initiated and sustained networked publics through distribution practices that were oriented toward building trust; their texts displayed: interest, appreciation, reliability, service, credibility, and responsiveness. Both grassroots and commercial entities circulated texts in these networks, as they were sources of the ongoing renewal these different groups all needed in order to thrive. Sources of instability included conflicts over standards of writing quality, matters of profit, and the constancy of the demand to generate new interest and writing online. Children and their parents responded to these instabilities by welcoming and negotiating heterogeneous perspectives and partnerships. Implications of the study call for further research and teaching about the art of networked public discourse and digital delivery.

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PART I: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Rationale

Even in the midst of tremendous response to his research, Donald Graves—the father of process writing pedagogy—issued this caution to the field: We must always continue to reexamine our approaches to teaching in light of children's work (Graves, 1984; also see Newkirk, 2007). "The enemy is orthodoxy," Graves warned, because "orthodoxies make us tell old stories about children at the expense of the new stories they are telling us today" (p. 193). Rather than assuming we know what children will do, he suggested, we should follow them: "Children will continually surprise us if we let them," he wrote. "That is the joy of both research and teaching" (Graves 1981/2013, p. 53).

Honoring Graves and taking his cue, this dissertation aimed to appreciate the new stories children are telling us today about their digital and public writing lives, so that we might reexamine our teaching in light of children's (net)work. This ethnographic, multiple-case study focused on three children (ages 11-13) who developed networked publics that were diverse, well-connected, and powerful in the world. Internet artifacts were collected. Children were interviewed, as were their parents and other people (children and adults) who became interested in mobilizing with and through these networked publics. Toward the development of curriculum and instruction pedagogy for writing publics (Yancey, 2004), this study explored how children's writing was distributed and circulated online, and how children and their parents successfully negotiated the inherent instabilities of writing in public(s).

This dissertation is presented in three parts: *Part I: Introduction to the Study* (Chapters 1-3); *Part II: Presentation of Findings* (Chapters 4-6); and *Part III: Discussion of Findings* (Chapter 7). In this first chapter, I suggest that children's social worlds and future opportunities will increasingly depend on their knowledge of how to write for distributed audiences. As such, I argue that we should now turn our attention toward examples of powerful networked publics that might inspire interest and innovation the research and teaching of networked, public writing.

Children's Social Worlds Online Are Increasingly Public

Children's uses of the internet are increasingly social. This was the conclusion of Marsh's (2014a) recent paper, comparing data from 2004 to data from 2014 on children's digital literacies in the UK. As she noted across studies, even children younger than 9-years-old now use the internet increasingly independently, and they make more extensive links with others online—locally, nationally, and globally. They avidly seek and circulate peer-to-peer content, like YouTube videos produced by other children (see also Marsh, 2014b). They engage in more intergenerational and peer-to-peer communication, including using social media like Facebook and Twitter (with adults or siblings). More social communication has allowed children more opportunity for collaborative text production and sharing with affinity groups. "It is anticipated that the trends will be sustained in years ahead." Marsh concluded:

> Literacy for young children is even more of a social practice today than it was in 2004… The future of literacy research will be to pursue further the social turn, as it is shaped by the technological developments ahead of us, as well as to consider the other "turns"—the visual turns, the material | immaterial turn, the affective turn, amongst others. (p. 14)

To that list, this study would add that it is time to take a *public turn* in literacy pedagogy— a turn made some time ago in pedagogy for college-age writers (Mathieu, 2005; Farmer, 2013) but now newly relevant to children given their increasingly social uses of the internet.

In broader research on children's internet use, there is further evidence that children's internet uses are not only increasing, but expanding to include new audiences and more engagement with social media. In a large-scale study of kids across Europe, the EU Kids Online project found that tweens (9-12 year olds) now use the internet much like teens did five and six years ago (Holloway, Green, & Livingstone, 2013). They found that one in five tweens are in touch with people on the internet that have no connection to their daily lives; almost one in three keep their profile public in social networks; and one in six have more than 100 contacts in their social network profiles (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, Ólafsson, 2011). Meanwhile in the United States, half of five year olds are already on the internet, as are two-thirds of 8 year olds (Gutnick, Robb, Takeuchi, & Kotler, 2011), and among their favorites are public sites like social networks and YouTube (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Though children are often banned from public social networks, millions of children seem to use them anyhow (Consumer Reports, 2011). Researchers have found that parents help their children gain access, even if it means lying about their children's age (Boyd, Hargittai, Schultz, & Palfrey, 2011). These parents wanted their children to have access to public life, which today means participating in public and on commercial sites (Boyd & Magid, 2011). As children's production and dissemination of texts online makes more clear than ever before, "children do, in fact, take part in the same world(s) as adults" (Carrington, 2008a, p. 163).

Cultivating Expansive Networks is Important to Children's Future Opportunities

The expansion of children's social worlds is reflective of the expansion of social and cultural life more broadly as we've become a networked society. In *Networked: The New Social Operating System,* Rainie & Wellman (2012) describe how broader and more fragmented social arrangements have accompanied widespread uses of the internet and mobile technologies. As a result, our social worlds are no longer bound by geography and kinship like the villages and door-to-door neighborhoods of days past—today, "the new media is the new neighborhood" (p. 13). As networked individuals, we aren't expected to rely only upon family members or settled groups for support. Rather, we are increasingly partial members of many networks—and these are networks that we locate ourselves. As these scholars suggest, the more successful among us will be networked individuals knowing how to do things like: locate others with shared interests, form ad hoc groups to access resources, develop networks that are big and diverse, and build trust and social capital across these networks. The extent of our opportunities is related to our networked social world-building:

> [T]hose with diverse, broad-ranging networks are often in better social shape and have a greater capacity to solve problems than those who have smaller networks. Quantity does equal quality. Not only do larger networks provide more overall sociability, support, information, and connections to the rest of the world, but preliminary research shows that each tie in a large network is likely to be more supportive than those in smaller networks. A culture and network of support breeds more support. (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, p. 266)

A similar point is made by Rheingold (2011), broadcasting YouTube to his own large networks of followers; he sums the point emphatically: "What you know or don't know about how networks work can influence how much freedom, wealth, and participation you and your children will have for the rest of the century."

Here, appreciations for networked culture more broadly intersect with what we expect for children—and by extension, what we might teach them in schools. In *Net Smart: How to Thrive Online*, Rheingold (2012) argued that network literacy should be a new essential in our educational curriculum. Writing for educators, the authoring team of Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, and Weigel (2006) suggested a similar point; they name networking as one of the key cultural competencies in a participatory culture. They argue that it now underpins children's capacities to learn:

> Learning in a networked society involves understanding how networks work and how to deploy them for one's own ends. It involves understanding the social and cultural contexts within which different information emerges, when to trust and when not to trust others to filter and prioritize relevant data, and how to use networks to get one's own work out into the world and in front of a relevant, and, with hope, appreciative public. (Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 51)

For this reason, among others, they argue that networking is an essential to a 21st century media education that supports learners and learning. Taken together with the scholarship addressed in this section, the point these scholars of digital culture and media share in common could be summed as follows: *In our network society, children's future opportunities—including the opportunity to learn in school—will depend on knowing how to locate and cultivate appreciative social relationships with more distributed, heterogeneous public audiences.*

Net Work is Writers' Work

If children's learning to expand social networks is very important, then children's learning how to write is more important than ever. In literacy studies, we have long appreciated the ways that social relations are constructed in and through language use. In related scholarship from technical communication, we can also see how others have appreciated and studied the special importance of writing in coordinating networks that are very distributed. As has been noted by Spinuzzi (2007), and Swarts (2010), work in the information economy is now distributed work, not the industrial economy's more stable, modular work structures. It lacks "inherent order" but finds stabilities in texts, which are "instruments of coordination" texts (Swarts, 2010, p. 130). In his study of telecommunications workers, Spinuzzi (2008) observed how "net work is characterized by unpredictable and intermittent connections among widely distributed points" (p. 204). Because associations are intricate and unpredictable, workers could find themselves working with nearly anyone," and so they "must constantly coordinate, negotiate, build trust and alliances, learn, and cross boundaries" (p. 201). As Spinuzzi concluded, net workers must be strong and adaptable communicators.

Similarly, Brandt (2015) has appreciated that alongside the rise of our information economy and a digital revolution has come a rise in mass writing. Concomitant with the rise in the knowledge economy and rise in networked communication, "writing is overtaking reading as the skill of critical consequence" (p. 161). It is what keeps the internet's economy going:

> In this economy texts serve as a chief means of production and a chief output of production, and writing becomes a dominant form of manufacturing. Millions of Americans now engage in creating, processing, and managing written communication as a major aspect of their work. It is not unusual for many American adults to spend 50 percent or more the workday with their hands on keyboards and their minds on audiences… As the nature of work in the United States has changed - toward making and managing information and knowledge in increasingly globalized settings - intense pressure has come to bear on the productive side of literacy, the writing side (Brandt, 2004; Drucker, 2003) (Brandt, 2015, p. 3)

As her study of adults and young adult writers revealed (Brandt, 2015), outside of school, people's literacies are developing differently. The internet has made writers and writing visible, and increasingly writers are more interested in seeing other writers and being seen by them—recruiting each other into the service of more writing. This is a new direction in the history of mass literacy:

> For the first time in history, masses of humans have keyboards under their hands that connect them to people at a distance and screens that shine back at them the public look of their own written utterances. Yet these profound social and cognitive changes in the direction of mass literacy go

> unremarked… Is it possible - indeed necessary - to contemplate approaches to literacy based primarily in writing? (p. 159)

To begin to contemplate those approaches, Brandt suggests we need to better understand (research) how a writing-based literacy develops. In this dissertation, the extension was to explicitly consider children's literacy development, because (as we've seen above) children too are connecting with people "at a distance" on screens. They too are learning to write with the "public look" of their writing shining back at them.

Toward a Pedagogy for Writing Publics

Though it is new to think about *children* writing in public and circulating texts online, it isn't new in the field of literacy studies more broadly. It has been widely-appreciated, for at least a decade, that this is an important topic to bring into our classroom. Among calls in the field to attend to public writing pedagogy, perhaps the most widely cited are those of Kathleen Yancey. In 2004 she issued a bold call: for us to create a new writing curriculum for the 21st century that would not be based on testing, but on the worthy goal of creating "thoughtful, informed, technologically adept writing publics" (p. 308). Here, she drew a parallel between the self-organized circles of 19th-century *reading publics* and today's *writing publics* online. We could bring that that kind of writing into schools, and we could give to composition pedagogy a new vocabulary, new practices, and new outcomes. By helping to create writing publics, Yancey suggested schools could be helping to create citizen writers, who are:

> citizens whose civic literacy is global in its sensibility and its communicative potential, and whose commitment to humanity is characterized by consistency and generosity as well as the ability to write for purposes that are unconstrained and audiences that are nearly unlimited. (p. 321)

In the years that followed, abundant examples of this accumulated—as was evident in Yancey's 2009 Presidential address to the *National Council of Teachers of English*. "Suddenly, it seems, writers are *everywhere*," she said. "Opportunities for composing abound—MySpace and Facebook and GoogleDocs and multiple blogs and platforms—and on national media sites… where they are both recipients *and* creators of our news" (p. 327). In this talk, she gave a wealth of examples to show the innovative, participatory practices young writers were engaging in online, and she extolled how much they knew about networking and audience and circulation. Again, she hoped schools might help channel this writing in a civic direction. In an "Age of Composition," Yancey suggested, we'd need new models of writing curriculum, new models of teaching writing, and new models of composition (p. 316). To construct these new models, we'd "articulate the new models of composing developing right in front of our eyes" (p. 322). Two things would be especially important in developing our models: First, attending the "hitherto neglected dimension: the role of writing for the public;" and second, attending to the ways writing circulates in the world—beyond "obsessive attention to form" and toward thinking about the consequences of writing in the world (pp. 332, 333).

The latter point, the gesture Yancey (2004; 2009) makes it toward the work of Trimbur (2000; 2003), whose treatment of circulation has become a touchstone in composition studies concerned with public writing. Attending to circulation, as Trimbur calls for, means shifting from training our pedagogical solely on writing as an act of composing and toward writing as a thing—that is, toward its "material manifestations and consequences… as it circulates in the world" (Trimbur, 2003, p. 18). Here, Trimbur would update our concerns with *delivery*, that fifth canon of classical rhetoric. As he envisioned it delivery wasn't just a matter of technique (e.g., choosing a way of speaking or a typography for printing), but rather a matter of ethics. He called for educators to look beyond the act of composing alone, and toward the systems by which writing circulates, and in so doing revisit “the unfinished work of the democratic revolutions to expand public forums and popular participation in civic life” (p. 191).

In the years since Trimbur’s entreaty, and with the rise in networked communication, there has indeed been a revival of interest in circulation—especially through the resuscitation of studying delivery, which is now reimagined as *digital delivery* (Porter, 2009). As debates heat up over rights to writing and digital media, and how it will be circulated online, it has been appreciated for how circulation is public work, and should become a part of the college composition curriculum (Lockridge, 2012). At the college level, calls have been made for empirical examples of digital delivery (Ridolfo, 2012). This has also been appreciated as an important thing to teach to adolescents. Bomer (2011) has called English teachers to explicitly notice and name circulation with their students too, appreciating the relationship between students’ knowledge of how writing circulates and their future opportunities: “If we want our students to develop practices that make them effective participants in digital culture, we need to keep track of current ways people are circulating their texts and make those ways explicit to students” (p. 253).

Taken together, the examples suggest an ongoing interest among scholars in bringing public writing and its circulation into our schools and our teaching. Repeatedly, we’ve underscored these things: The potential democratic value of this kind of writing; the need for future examples we can use to envision new models for our teaching; and the need to observe more closely how writing travels in the world. In this dissertation, the extension of these ideas was to explicitly turn attention to children writers and invite primary and intermediate grade teachers into the conversation. Extending Yancey (2009), we might notice that children too are writing “*everywhere*” (p. 327).

Onward from Orthodoxy?

What orthodoxies might we have to reexamine if we were to move forward with a networked, public writing pedagogy for children? What have we taught children up to now about circulation? What kind of writing have we expected them to do?

In our writing curriculum—based in print models of literacy development—one legacy we've carried is a sequential model for literacy development: print literacy first, digital literacy next, and networked literacy last (if at all) (Yancey, 2009). Even in our more recent curriculum in the US, the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010), the expectation for children to use the internet to produce or publish writing doesn't come until Grade 4; linking to sources not until Grade 7; and corresponding to other people's feedback online not until close to graduation—Grade 11. How peculiar that will seem to children who've been online since age 5! (see Gutnick, Robb, Takeuchi, & Kotler, 2011) As Bomer and Maloch (2011) point out, though the Common Core suggests it will "lay out a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century," it fails to address important functions of literacy in this century, like the construction of public identities online or civic participation (p. 3). Indeed, the kind of writing it calls for may be more reminiscent of the nineteenth century: texts delivered in the familiar packages of the modes: narrative, exposition, and argument. Surely these are still important foundations in literacy, but shouldn't we include the important new foundations that reflect what writing also means today? As DeVoss and Porter (2006) suggest, there is paradigm shift involved in rethinking the delivery of writing:

> from an older view of writing as alphabetic text on paper, intended for print distribution, to an emergent and ill-understood view of writing as weaving digital media for distribution across networked spaces for various audiences engaging in different types of reading. (p. 179)

Looking back on the history of writing instruction, delivering writing in schools meant passing one's papers up the aisle to an audience of one: the teacher (e.g., Britton et al., 1975; Trimbur, 2000). As Kress (2003) has suggested, this was delivery instruction suited to the industrial information age, when the power to distribute of messages was expected to be limited to a privileged few, and expected to be regulated by authorities like the church and state. This legacy may linger in the ways we teach writing now, even in our celebrated process models for writing instruction. Yancey (2004) suggested the following:

> As generous, varied, and flexible as [our model] is in terms of its aims and as innovative as it is in terms of its pedagogy…in contrast to the development of a writing public, the classroom writer is not a member of a collaborative group with a common project like to the world at large and delivered multiple genres and media, but a singular person writing over and over again—to the teacher.
>
> John Trimbur calls our school model of writing the *in loco parentis* model: we are the parents who in our practices continue to infantilize our students as we focus their gaze and their energy and their reflection on the moment of creation, on process. I tend to think of it another, complementary way, as a remediated tutorial model of writing… Students do engage with each other, often do write to the world, and frequently do develop elaborated processes—all to the good. But if we believe that writing is social, shouldn't the system of circulation—the paths that the writing takes—extend beyond and around the single path from student to teacher? (pp. 310-311)

If it is has been hard to even think about wider circulation with college-age writers, how much harder might we have to work to imagine writing in the wider world with children? In primary classrooms, we've for the most part kept children's opportunities to produce and circulate texts contained (Carrington, 2005). Our writing workshop pedagogy is still so essential; but nonetheless it carries with it a very different vision of developing audience awareness: nestled around an author's chair and knee-to-knee with teachers and peers. These are not the loose, ad hoc networks of the digital formation; they are the tight-knit, intimate spaces of the literate social formation (see Gee & Hayes, 2011). In our research, too, our studies are primarily of how children's audience awareness develops in relation to people they know—relatives, peers, teachers (e.g., Baker, Rosendal, & Whitenack, 2000: Daiute & Dalton, 1993; Swaim, 2004; Walter, 2006; Wollman-Bonilla, 2000; 2003). Could we imagine otherwise? Could we find safe, supportive ways to bring writing pedagogy for children around the public turn too? (Mathieu, 2005; Farmer, 2013) Here, again, it would help to have some models to consider. And the good news is that child writers are, indeed, "*everywhere*" online these days. This dissertation sought some of them out, so that we might appreciate the new stories they have to tell us today.

Perhaps the current moment is parallel to the one we faced when research on young writers first took a social turn. In studies of audience awareness prior to that moment in the history of writing research, cognitive-developmental studies had suggested young writers were incapable of taking the perspectives of others or managing the cognitive burden of thinking about audiences while writing (e.g., Kroll, 1978; Fontaine, 1984; Golder & Coirier, 1994). And yet, as we observed young writers' social worlds in situ, we came to understand they were much more aware of their audiences than we had previously imagined (see Rowe, 1989; Wollman-Bonilla, 2000; 2001). Here we might recall Graves once again for inspiration. He challenged developmental orthodoxies that had long kept young writers in schools tied to the tight controls of handwriting, spelling lists, and holiday compositions. He saw child writers as more similar to adult writers than they were different, and in doing so Graves forever raised the bar on our expectations of young writers (Newkirk, 2007). In that same period, Harste, Woodward, & Burke (1984) were also challenging orthodoxies about biological ages and cognitive stages that assumed children were preliterate and emergent. "Children know much more than we or past researchers have ever dared to assume," they wrote. "And many of the premises and assumptions with which we began must give way to more generous perspectives if research and understanding are to proceed" (xviii). At present, literacy research may again have a moment in which we might reexamine our assumptions and come together to now to make a public turn (Mathieu, 2005) in our research and teaching about child writers. If we again take generous perspectives and study writers in situ (now online), what might children have to teach us this time around?

A Study of Children's Networked Publics

This dissertation study was designed to increase our understandings of the literacies young writers develop as they learn to write for public, distributed audiences online. In response to calls within the field, this study aimed to deepen our understandings of young people's public writing online (Brandt, 2015; Yancey, 2004), and to increase our appreciation of how writing circulates and becomes consequential in the world (Yancey, 2004; Trimbur, 2003). As such, this study focused on the delivery of writing online—and in particular two dimensions of delivery: the *distribution* of children's writing and on its *circulation* in distributed audiences. To help educators and researchers begin to envision children's writing as having public consequence, this study was designed to offer descriptive ethnographic data about three children's networked publics that were powerful enough to mobilize people and resources toward common goals and meaningful work in the world. To understand how powerful networks get made (and perhaps unmade), this study also focused on sources of stability and instability, and how children and parents responded to instabilities in these networks. Based on these concerns, there were three main strands of inquiry, focusing on the following research questions:

- **On Distribution**: How did young writers distribute texts in such a way that they summoned and maintained a networked public?
- **On Circulation**: How and why did networked publics circulate young writers' texts?
- **On (De|Re)Stabilization**: What were sources of instabilities in children's networked publics? How were those instabilities negotiated?

Prospective Contributions

This study's findings should add to our knowledge base about how young writers use literacy to build meaningful relations with more distributed audiences. Though interest and scholarship in digital literacies more broadly has begun to accumulate, research on children's uses of written language online is still just beginning. This study responds to calls in the field to work toward a stronger understanding of how young writers develop into members of writing publics (Yancey, 2004; 2009) and how they develop literacies that are strongly based in writing (Brandt, 2015). Finally, by offering rich descriptions and positive examples, this study may help researchers and teachers envision these new social worlds of children, and perhaps become interested in undertaking their own inquiries in research or in their classroom teaching.

This study's findings should also add to the field's conceptual and methodological perspectives for studying literacy activities that are more distant or distributed than is customary in situated studies of local literacies. This study borrows the construct of *publics* from rhetorical and media studies, and draws it into K-12 literacy studies to conceptualize and study children's discursive interaction with audiences that are widely distributed, vast in number, and continually (re)generating new associations.

Additionally, this study offers a response to calls in literacy studies to address how to study literacy translocally using actor-network theory (e.g., Barton & Hamilton, 2005; Baynham & Prinsloo 2009; Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Leander & Lovvorn, 2006; Reder & Davila, 2005). Few empirical examples of actor-network theory have yet appeared in literacy studies. The current study makes a modest attempt to carry an ANT conceptual framework into an empirical study of social literacies; it reports on its successes and failures in order to inform other researchers who might be interested in this kind of undertaking in the future.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation is organized into three parts. *Part I: Introduction to the Study* presents the logic and conduct for the study. As we've seen, Chapter 1 argues the need for this study, as a response to the needs of children and their teachers today. Next, Chapter 2 presents the study's theoretical and relational underpinnings, providing these respectively through the presentation of a conceptual framework and a review of related empirical literature to which this study responds. Chapter 3 then describes the study's methodological design and the methods by which those designs were realized as an empirical study.

Part II: Presentation of Findings displays three cases of children's networked publics: This Kid Reviews Books (Chapter 4), Matt's Bats (Chapter 5), and reKindle (Chapter 6). In each chapter, findings for each research question are addressed in sequence (i.e., On Distribution, On Circulation, On (De|Re)Stabilization. Given this study's interest in informing pedagogy, I pause after each research question's findings are presented (three times within chapter) and suggest how the data might inform our thinking about writing instruction in schools.

Part III: Discussion of Findings synthesizes findings across cases, and discussed their contribution to what we know and do now about writing instruction. In the end, implications are offered in the hopes they might spur further interest and innovation in the study and teaching of networked, public writing with children.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework & Review of Literature

This chapter introduces the conceptual framework that guided this study, and then provides a detailed explanation of how particular theoretical constructs were used in analysis of the data. These are followed by a review of research literature that explores what we've understood so far about how children conceptualize distributed audiences on the internet, and how children engage with those audiences through writing.

Conceptual Framework

Networked publics is a term borrowed from scholarship on digital, participatory culture (e.g., Boyd, 2011; 2014; Ito, 2008). Though defined variously, in general the term is used to signal the understanding that interaction online is both technological (material) and social in nature. As such, it generally reflected the phenomenon I wanted to describe in this dissertation: By *networked*, I meant that children's interactions were technological (online); and by *publics*, I meant that children's interactions were social. However, this general conceptualization of the phenomenon did not afford the strong theoretical and conceptual underpinnings desired for the study. So, in order to ground my conceptualization and analysis of networked publics, I selected conceptual frameworks that were apropos.

First, I looked to theories of publics from Dewey (1927) and Warner (2002), which offered a way to understand the discursive and temporal features of distributed social relations. Leaning especially on Warner's conceptualization of publics, I came to appreciate publics as being constructed through shared attention; they are "social spaces created by the reflexive circulation of discourse" (p. 62) and "a relation among strangers" (p. 55). Then, I drew on actor-network theory, which offered a way to understand how precarious, distant attention among strangers could hold together and become (at least temporarily) stabilized; that is, I came to understand how publics temporarily stabilized as actor-networks. By networks, I meant recurring associations—following Spinuzzi's (2008) definition of networks as "relatively stable assemblages of humans and nonhumans that collectively form standing sets of transformations;" that is, phenomenon are re-represented again and again in fairly stable chains of translation (p. 12). To think about what made particularly powerful networks, I leaned on ANT's translation model of power, which sees power as a consequence of collective action: whenever something is passed hand to hand over space and time by lots of actors (Latour, 1986a), and when those diverse actors and their attention are mobilized toward a common goal (Callon, 1986).

Holding these ideas together allowed me to conceptualize *networked publics* with the following working definition: relatively stable, ongoing circulations or re-representations of discourse, enacted by heterogonous actors online mobilizing toward a common goal. I thus thought of the concept of networked publics as not only a technological phenomenon, but also a discursive and rhetorical-political phenomenon; I thought about how networked publics were performed in relation to technologies, texts, and power. I added to this a social literacies perspective (e.g., Street, 1984) that led me to appreciate the role of texts in the construction of communities or social relations. Taken together, these approaches sensitized me to how texts were distributed and circulated over distance and time online, and how they coordinated distant people and things to do meaningful work that was powerful in the world.

Below, I introduce these theoretical approaches in a little more depth, *publics*, *social literacies*, and *actor-networks*. I explain how I used each one to focus this investigation of distribution, circulation, and (de|re)stabilization**.**

Publics

In order to re-conceptualize the social space between children and unknown interlocutors (beyond "stranger-danger"), this investigation drew on two writers concerned with publicness: literary theorist Michael Warner and social theorist John Dewey. For Warner (2002), the term *publics* distinguishes a particular kind of social space for discourse that is self-organized and among strangers. Publics are "created by the reflexive circulation of discourse" over time, and thus come into being when people exchange texts across distance and time (p. 8). This review extends Warner's study of publics in print culture to ask about the culture of networked publics. This review was also informed by Dewey's (1927) notion that an important aspect of democratic public life was the expansion of people's perceptions of wider communities of interest; this was the "vector through which people learn to abstract themselves from their own perspectives" (Barnett, 2008, p. 19). Taken together, these theories from Warner and Dewey can help us understand publicness as both openness to communication to those we approach as new people, as well as attention to the importance of shared interests (Barnett, 2008). Next, I provide more background on these two theories of publics.

Publics according to Dewey. Dewey published *The Public and its Problems* in 1927. At that time, public social life was extending over greater distances given the spatial expansion of transportation, communications, and economics (Barnett, 2008). People were becoming newly entangled in relations of cause and effect with people, in numbers so large and with consequences so indirect that they could no longer calculate how they would affect others or be affected by them (see Barnett, 2008; Dewey, 1927). Though people could not trace all of their distant consequences, Dewey argued that the important thing was that people be sensitized to those consequences (Barnett, 2008; Dewey, 1927). For Dewey, then, a public was something that emerged when people perceived consequences beyond those in which they were directly concerned. A public included "all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for"

(Dewey, 1927, pp. 16-17). It was in this general concern for others, and in responding to events to which people are not immediately affected, that Dewey located the political and civic virtue of publicness (Wolin, 2004; see Barnett, 2008). Publics were “about matters over which people have good reason to be concerned with and care about together,” and so they were instrumentally valuable to democracy (Barnett, 2008, p. 24).

Following Dewey, this study was interested in how children become sensitized to distant consequences and concerns, and in their social imaginations as they called forth publics into being. Further, this study from the outset sought cases that might have obvious instrumental value to democracy, and one of these is included as a focal case (Chapter 6’s philanthropic networked public). However, all cases evidenced a spirit of democratic publicness among the children.

Publics according to Warner. Though Dewey’s ideas were important to the study, Warner’s conceptualization of publics was the dominant partner in this conceptual framework, and it translated well into an analytic construct of these cases. In his influential essay, “Publics and Counterpublics,” Warner (2002) defined a public as “the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse” (p. 62) and as “a relation among strangers” (p. 55). Here, strangers are not conceived of as being mysterious, or some “disturbing presence requiring resolution” (p. 56); rather, strangers are appreciated as part of everyday life, and addressing strangers is considered a defining feature of modern public discourse. A public is made up of indefinite persons who self-organize:

> Public discourse, in the nature of its address, abandons the security of its positive, given audience. It promises to address anybody. It commits itself in principle to the possible participation of any stranger. (p. 81)

Thus when we speak or write to a public, we project other people who we imagine; as such, summoning a public is an act of “poetic world-making” (p. 82). If our attempts successfully earn others' attention, a public comes into being. Publics are constituted through attention; they "commence with the moment of attention, must continually predicate renewed attention, and cease to exist when attention is no longer predicated" (p. 61). They are made not by one person or text, but rather by "the concatenation of texts through time" (p. 62). In this kind of free, voluntary, and active organization of attention among strangers, Warner suggests that publics "resemble the model of voluntary association that is so important to civil society" (p. 61).

From publics to networked publics. Following Warner, I conceived of publics as ongoing discourse engaging children and increasing numbers of new people over time. I saw publics as not only instrumentally valuable (following Dewey), but also intrinsically valuable (following Barnett, 2008), as shared attention with new people is a useful end, in and of itself. As such, I sought cases of children who assembled networks for varied purposes ranging from philanthropy to entertainment. I also leaned on Warner's ideas about the reflexive circulations of discourse by attending to publics in these ways: as they were imagined or summoned by authors [Strand 1: Distribution]; as they drew attention from new people [Strand 2: Circulation]; and as they renewed attention over time [Strand 3: (De|Re)Stabilization].

In addition to borrowing, this study also adapts Warner's public sphere theory. Warner's original idea of publics was based on print-era texts (e.g., circulating newsletters, newspapers, and magazines). This study extends the concept of publics to the current digital era, re-conceptualizing publics as *networked publics*. It also draws publics from theory into practice, making it a lens for empirical study. Rather than understand publics as only social imaginaries constituted by attention and discursive world-making, this study understands publics as having a material basis that is appropriate to empirical investigation. In this digital age, shared attention is not only imagined, it is also traceable with the affordances of digital tools (e.g., through analytics that document how many people have viewed a website, or have linked to it).

Limitations. Not all attention is visible on the internet, or can even be accounted for empirically. Certainly, the attention of online publics could materialize anywhere in the world, online or off, and their connections over distance and time could be infinite. As such, this study was limited in its tracking of attention; it tracked attention online only, and just for a short time. Nonetheless, these limitations may not be unforgivable, as the phenomenon is primarily associated with the internet and its use. Further, the internet offered an extraordinary volume of online evidence that was readily accessible. Those online connections would continuously cue this study to important offline activity, even if the study itself couldn't pursue those connections by physically-locating itself in so many diverse geographies. Thus, although publics always exceed the limits of empirical investigation (as Warner maintains), I have suggested that publics leave traces that may allow us to know more about how the social worlds that we imagine get made and reproduced.

Additionally, this study did not make full use of Warner's approach, as it left off an important part of that theory—namely, counter publics. This was a result of having difficulty conceptualizing the children's networks relevant to counter-publics initially (they are purposefully anti-social in nature, which wasn't a good descriptor for my cases). However, by the end of the study, I realized that there were perhaps counter-public dimensions, as I looked more deeply into the instabilities with respect to the different perspectives between groups. A future study might appreciate that point sooner. For my purposes, ANT provided the lens I needed on power, and so substituted for counter-publics.

Analysis of publics. In Warner's (2002) conceptualization, publics are relations among strangers, created through the ongoing circulation of discourse. Warner's idea of publics as reflexive circulations of discourse shaped my analysis of distribution and circulation in several ways. First, I thought about publicness as call-and-response (see Barnett, 2008). I looked for patterns of call-and-response as a way to locate stabilization or "standing sets of translations" (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 88). Second, I attended to what Warner calls the "poetic world-making" of publics. As he explains, writing to a public means summoning it into being, projecting its shape, and trying to realize that world through address:

> Public discourse says not only: "Let a public exist," but: "Let it have this character, speak this way, see the world in this way." It then goes out in search of confirmation that such a public exists, with greater or lesser success—success being further attempts to cite, circulate, and realize the world-understanding it articulates. Run it up the flagpole, and see who salutes. Put on a show, and see who shows up. (Warner, 2002, p. 82)

As such, I coded strategies authors used to summon publics, observing how they did this through language and, extending Warner, how they did this through choices of media. Finally, I analyzed temporalities in each case. Warner points out that publics have particular temporalities of circulation, distinctive "punctual rhythms" (p. 68), as for example, in dated newspapers, magazines, and annuals. In my analysis, I observed, characterized, and compared the temporalities in which different networks were performed.

But publics didn't get me very far in thinking about my question concerning how networks stabilize. In fact, Warner characterizes publics as inherently unstable:

> Public discourse, in the nature of its address, abandons the security of its positive, given audience. It promises to address anybody. It commits itself in

principle to the possible participation of any stranger. It therefore puts at risk the concrete world that is its given condition of possibility. This is its fruitful perversity. Public discourse postulates a circulatory field of estrangement that it must then struggle to capture as an addressable entity. No form with such a structure could be very stable. (Warner, 2002, p. 82, 113)

As such, I needed other constructs to help study how some publics become (at least relatively, temporarily) stabilized. I found these constructs in actor-network theory, which more heavily informed my analysis in Chapters 5 and 6.

Social literacies

A social perspective of literacy is especially suited to appreciating the unorthodox in children's everyday lives as writers, because it recognizes that literacies: change; are purposeful and embedded in social goals and cultural practices; and are acquired often through informal learning and meaning making (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). This study takes a social literacies perspective to understand children's knowledge of written language as acquired through social interaction and meaning making (Harste et al., 1984). Through their participation in social life, children are understood to adopt particular community definitions of authoring, includes ideas about and ways of constructing text (Rowe, 2003). To understand new ideas of authoring in relation to the internet, this study adopts a complementary new literacies perspective. New literacies studies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006) are sensitive to new priorities, values, and sensibilities that emerge as we adopt new technologies for use in our meaning making; currently this is associated with a cyberspatial-postindustrial mindset favoring ideas about participation, collaboration, and distribution, among others. Literacies are understood to be always changing, but now deictic—changing especially rapidly with the internet (Leu, 2006).

Further, following in the tradition of New Literacy Studies (NLS), this study was focused on how literacies are linked to power structures and ideology (Street, 1984). This sensitivity to power relations was appreciated especially in the third research strand (De|Re)Stabilization. Further, NLS maintains that the consequences of literacy are always dependent on how literacy is enacted by particular social groups (Street, 1984). Its inquiries thus commonly focus on spoken and/or written texts as they are used locally at specific places and times, and they produce in-depth accounts of these by using ethnographic and/or sociolinguistic methods (Street, 1993). Though not physically co-present with participants during data collection (outside of interviews), I adopted a mindset of being in situ. I spent focused and extended periods of time in their online environments collecting data, and used ethnographic methods to generate close descriptions of my online observations and experiences.

From local to translocal. Though founded in the social literacies perspective, the current study also sought to extend NLS's theoretical and methodological constructs to account for texts in use at localities remote from one another in distance and time. In this undertaking, it was inspired by other third-generation NLS researchers. Collectively, we as literacy researchers are now working in the midst of social and technological changes, at a time when texts are increasingly produced and consumed across localities; as such, we have become increasingly aware of the need for methodologies and methods for transcontextual research (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009; Kell, 2009). For example, the challenges that Farrell (2009) describes in studying texts in the global marketplace are equally applicable to this study of texts in networked publics:

> Texts like these do, theoretically and practically, have global reach. They not only move across contexts, they constitute contexts, especially when the members of the community are geographically and temporally remote from each other. They challenge us to reconsider what we mean by the term

"local" and to consider extending our methodologies in ways which take account of new forms of locality that are not primarily geographically bounded. (p. 188)

We must now shift our thinking and research, "from literacy situated in given places and times towards a conceptualization of dynamic transcontextual flows" (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009, p. 18).

Devising a way to do this in the current study, I was inspired by Brandt and Clinton's (2002) widely-cited essay, "Limits of the Local: Expanding Perspectives on Literacy as a Social Practice." Here, Brandt and Clinton problematized literacy studies' legacy of associating context with settings that are here-and-now, and the ways this creates a division between the local from the global. They argue that our social practice perspectives now need "more complicated analytical frames… that follow the threads of networks both into and out of local and other contexts," including the material aspects of literacy (pp. 347-348). Turning to Latour's sociology for cues, they argue that we might repair the break between local and global using constructs drawn from Latour's actor-network theory; it appreciates that all is local, and looks to things (non-humans) to understand how activity gets connected across locales. Bringing that idea into literacy studies, Brandt and Clinton argue that

> it is possible to address certain "autonomous" aspects of literacy without appealing to the "autonomous model" of literacy. Literacy as a technology – as a collection of things and mediums – does not exist free of human contexts and ideological designs. It is unfair and dangerous to treat literacy as if it did. Those are the valuable lessons that Street, Besnier, Gee, and others have taught. But, as Latour reminds us, many human contexts are given to the activities of de-localizing meaning and as often as not call on the technologies of literacy to accomplish them. We have to find more

> sustained ways of recognizing this fact in our theories and research. We believe one way is through more attention to the material dimensions of literacy, its durability, its capacity to connect, mediate, represent, and hold together multiple interests. (pp. 354-355)

As they suggested, we might work against the "limits of the local" (p. 337) by taking up actor-network theory. In the current study, I do that by tracing literacy networks by following the circulations of texts in their "(some)thingness" online (p. 353).

Actor-Networks

Over the past decade, Brandt and Clinton's recommendation to explore actor-network theory has been reiterated (e.g., Barton & Hamilton, 2005; Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009; Reder & Davila, 2005), and repeatedly recommended among leading scholars looking to the future of literacy studies (see Baynham & Prinsloo's 2009 edited volume, *The Future of Literacy Studies*). However, as yet, we in literacy studies have only just begun to explore how actor-network theory can be taken up in our empirical studies (see Clarke, 2002; Hamilton, 2010; Leander & Lovvorn, 2006; Lenters, 2009, 2012; Nichols, 2006a; Nichols, Rowsell, Nixon, & Rainbird, 2012).

This study aimed to contribute to the expansion of theoretical, methodological, and analytical approaches for translocal literacy research by taking up an actor-network perspective. Actor-network theory (or ANT) developed in the 1980s with the scholarship of Bruno Latour, John Law, and Michel Callon. Sometimes referred to as the sociology of translations, or the sociology of associations, ANT studies emerged from efforts to understand from a sociological perspective how scientific and technical knowledge were constructed (Latour, 2005; Law, 2009). In devising how to do this kind of sociology, ANT scholars adopted an alternative approach to studying the social than the actor/system or micro/macro frameworks of traditional sociology. They took issue with the dominant social framework that nested the local event "inside" of a larger global framework, and thus forced researchers into a jump or a "yawning break" between what was enclosed (the local) and what enclosed (the global) (Latour, 2005, p. 174).

By contrast, ANT suggests that all is local (Latour, 2005). It revises the formerly local and formerly global, such that they are no longer nested but side by side, star-like shapes that are variously connected (Latour, 2005). As ANT would have it,

> macro no longer describes a *wider* or *larger* site in which the micro would be embedded like some Russian Matryoshka doll, but another equally local, equally micro place, which is *connected* to many others through some medium transporting specific types of traces… This move has the beneficial effect to keep the landscape flat, since what earlier… was situated "above" or "below" remains side by side and firmly on the same plane as the other loci which they were trying to overlook or include. What is now highlighted much more vividly than before are all the connections, the cables, the means of transportation, the vehicles linking places together. (Latour, 2005, p. 176)

ANT studies thus foreground movement (Latour, 1999a). They focus on connections and what links places together (Latour, 2005); these *are* the social. According to Latour (1999a), this is ANT's most useful contribution: "To have transformed the social from what was a surface, a territory, a province of reality, into a circulation" (p. 19). Society is no longer a whole in which other things are embedded, but rather society is "what travels 'through' everything" (Latour, 2005, pp. 241-241). The social is movement, transformation, translation, and enrollment (Latour, 2005).

Thus the task of ANT researchers is to follow continuous connections from one locale to another (Latour, 2005). To trace an actor-network, they follow things that appear to have come together as one (the actors), and they follow the vehicles, traces, or trails that have brought those actors together (the network) (Latour 2005). They observe "the performance of the social," or how "everyday things and parts of things… form associations or networks that keep expanding to extend across broad spaces, long distances, or time periods" (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010, p. 3). They do so in order to "understand precisely how these things come together – and manage to hold together, however temporarily, to form associations that produce agency and other effects" (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010, p. 3).

Taking up ANT in the current study, I conceptualized and analyzed networked publics as actor-networks. As such, I understood publics as being social spaces defined by people, things, and the discursive circulations between them. I observed actors (e.g., children and websites) and the vehicles that connected them (e.g., language, hyperlinks). I "follow[ed] the actors" (Latour, 2005, p. 12), beginning with key websites important in children's networks. I deployed those networks by observing what they did, what they linked to, what linked to them, and what texts (genres) and technologies connected them. Following ANT, I also "meticulously track[ed] specific, material everyday details" of the situations, sites, and activities of networked publics in formation (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010, p. 145). I also drew on ANT to avoid the often-used, but ill-defined term "global" in relation to 21st century literacies. Rather, I imagined networked publics more theoretically, as *actor-networks* that were securely connected to many places (Latour, 1999a; 2005).

The following constructs from actor-network theory were particularly important to this study: *translation, delegation, inscription,* and *deflation*. Respectively, they guided my inquiry and analysis toward: processes, people and things (humans and non-humans), texts and genres, and re-representations of texts over time. I briefly review each construct next.

Translation. ANT is interested in how entities join and change as they become a coordinated network (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010). Actor-networks are made through a process of connection and transformation called translation (Latour, 1999a). In this process, two previously unconnected entities become linked and transformed as their interests get aligned (at least temporarily) (Latour, 1999b). New links are created, or new relations assembled, as they are change. These senses of translation are reflected in the term translation, which carries both a linguistic sense of translation (as in, trying to relate different languages to one another) and a geometric sense of translation (as in, moving from place to place) (Latour, 1987). So network-building (or in this study, assembling publics) involves transformations in meanings and positions or locations (Latour, 1987).

Translation also helps to explain how actor-networks become powerful, another point of particular interest in this study. In a translation model, power is seen not as something people *have,* but as a consequence of *having enrolled* many other people (Latour, 1986a). Actor-networks are associations that carry on. As Spinuzzi (2008) explains, actor-networks are relatively stable, "standing sets of translations" (p. 88). The transformations or re-representations of phenomenon they involve become more predictable and (at least temporarily) stabilize.

Actor-networks and translation are constructs that are very relatable to the construct of publics described previously (following Warner, 2002). I thought of publics as actor-networks and their circulations as translations; that is, publics are actor-networks that are sustained through ongoing series of re-representations of discourse (distribution and circulation) over time. Further, the goals of publics and translations are one in the same: Publics must seek ongoing attention in order to survive (Warner, 2002), while translation can only carry on when different entities come together and mobilize or circulate (Clarke, 2002). So whether constructing an actor-network or a public, a network builder starts with the same problem—and this is a problem that is of great interest to ANT: How to convince and enroll others to share attention over time and space (see Latour, 1987). To study translation is to study the getting and keeping attention, and how powerful networks come to be. Translation was thus an apropos approach to the study of how young writers gain widespread attention, and how their texts get spread over time and distance by a world of others who make them powerful in the world.

Especially, I became interested in translation as conceptualized by Callon (1986): as a process that may be extended (and studied) over time. In his classic study, Callon observed the ongoing negotiations of marine biologists, local fisherman, and scallops at St. Brieuc Bay. Through these observations, Callon articulated translation as a process with four kinds of moments: *problematization*, *interessement*, *enrollment*, and *mobilization*. Respectively, these involve: establishing a shared problem, interesting allies, negotiating roles, and finally mobilizing all involved toward a common goal. At the end of translation, "if it is successful, only voices speaking in unison will be heard" (p. 19). On the other hand, translation can also become treason. Alliances can always be betrayed.

Callon's model of translation informed my study of translations as they occurred over an extended period of time. I began with the earliest artifacts I could locate online, and read forward in time, observing how each network developed by interesting and enrolling allies progressively. As such, I analyze distributions and circulations as ongoing processes. I thought of distribution as not just a one-time event (like passing out a business card right now), but as ongoing series of performances, carried out across time and media (extending the example, like passing out business cards today, that will refer you to a blog I'll update again, tomorrow, that links to a video I made last week, that YouTube will store indefinitely, etc.).

Callon's model also sensitized me to the rhetorical-political aspects of authors' distribution strategies. In my analysis of distribution, I noted how they were setting up problems, recruiting alliances, negotiating, and mobilizing others. In a translation model, power comes with being "taken in hand by an anonymous crowd of active individuals" (p. 209). Successfully spreading anything in the world involves engaging "well aligned" and "faithful" spokespersons or intermediaries (Latour, 1986a, p. 5; Akrich, Callon, & Latour, 2002). I coded authors' distributions accordingly, noting allies and spokespersons who emerged to speak for the network, and who became spoken for by the network. I also looked for points where these associations pulled apart or came loose and/or got reconnected.

Delegation. In ANT, alliances involve more than just relations among humans. In his essay "On Interobjectivity" (1996a), Latour writes, "Any time an interaction has temporal and spatial extension, it is because one has shared with non-humans" (p. 239). We *delegate* when dislocate human interaction from the particular moment and "make it rest provisionally on something else, while waiting to take it up again" (p. 234). In Latour's example, a shepherd delegates the act of containing the sheep to a fence; he folds himself in to the fence and borrows the affordances of its non-human ontology, like its "durability, duration, plasticity, [and] temporality" (p. 239). Delegation gives us "the ability to act at a distance through things" (Fenwick and Edwards, 2010, p. 18).

Drawing the point into the realm literacy studies, Brandt & Clinton (2002) note how they as authors fold themselves into the *Journal of Literacy Research* and thus delegate to the journal the work of disseminating their article so that they as authors are freed up to take on other tasks (like, perhaps, sleeping). Inspired by ANT, Brandt and Clinton suggest literacy is this view is understood not as an abstraction of language from the life-worlds of humans, but rather literacy is understood as "an abstraction or redistribution of elements of the human lifeworld into the lives of things;" as such, they suggest to literacy scholars that "what is folded in, how, and with what consequences become important analytical questions in the study of literate practices" (p. 353).

If the first problem of developing actor-networks (or publics) is how to interest others in participating and spreading something across time and space, the second problem is how to get them to hold together (Latour, 1987). Actor-networks are precarious (Law, 2009). Like political alliances, they tend to be unstable; people's interests drift (Spinuzzi, 2008). However, some networks do become durable as they spread out over distance and time (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010). Interactions in networks can stabilize and reproduce, and so come to seem "macrosocial" (Law, 1992, p. 380). In ANT terms, these settlements are punctualized (Law, 1992) or black-boxed (Latour, 1987). As their patterns become widely performed, networks become resources (Law, 1992) and generate effects (e.g., organizations, rules, routines, and policies) (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010). ANT studies are interested in observing how this happens. They inquire as to how some entities come into positions of control or incur faithful alliances (Callon, 1986). They are interested in the "mechanics of power" (Law, 1992, p. 380). In studying these mechanics, Latour (1987) observed that scientists and engineers who succeeded in growing their networks needed to bring in allies, and that, quite curiously, many of these allies were not men and women, but rather they were things. In ANT, things (or non-humans) are recognized as key to understanding power and how people act upon others at a distance.

The ANT construct of delegation addresses this idea: how things give people the ability to act at a distance (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010). Latour's (1999b) classic example of delegation is the speed bump. The speed bump is an illustration of how an engineer's agenda (to make drivers slow down) becomes delegated into concrete; though the engineer may have long since disappeared, his agenda remains active on the drive today. Humans like the engineer become "folded into nonhumans" (p. 189). For ANT, non-humans are essential to making social order possible; humans and non-humans exchange properties and form collectives (Latour, 1999b).

ANT studies thus treat humans and things as equally interesting, important, and agentive (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010). Things can be the immutable mobiles that help to reproduce networks, by synchronizing meaning and action across time, space, and actors (Hamilton, 2011; also see Callon, 1999; Latour 1987). As such, researchers are advised to pay attention to things that last longer than any particular interaction (Latour, 1986b). Texts are recognized as particularly important kinds of things or delegates in networks. It is in this concept of delegation where ANT intersects most noticeably with literacy studies and its ideas about texts as reifications and mediators of social worlds (Hamilton, 2011).

The current study builds on this shared interest between ANT and NLS in how texts hold together social worlds. Sensitized to delegations, I recognized that texts in networked publics were not only discursive things, but also material things that could be tracked over time and distance as they became consequential in the world. In analysis, the construct of delegation guided my attention toward texts (e.g., video montages, portfolios) and technologies unto which authors delegated delivery (e.g., subscriptions|follows) [Strand 1: Distribution]. Delegation also guided my methods for tracking circulations; I recognized search engines and hyperlinks as valued things that direct the flow of traffic among internet users (like virtual versions of Latour's speed bumps) [Strand 2: Circulation]. Finally, delegation guided my attention to the role of texts (among other kinds of things) in maintaining the social relations of networked publics [Strand 3: (De|Re)Stabilization].

Drawing on this construct of delegation, I observed how authors built relations by choosing good spokespersons and good spokesthings and then fixing them into texts (e.g., photos and videos). In my analysis of distribution and circulation, I coded how distribution was delegated to humans and non-humans. Some non-human allies were technologies. YouTube, for example, made networks longer and stronger by algorithmically recommending new allies (e.g., suggesting or auto-playing related videos based on similarities in videos' titles and audiences). In addition to technological allies like social media platforms, I also paid particular attention to another non-human allies that ANT calls *inscriptions* (Latour, 1986b) or, as we call them in literacy studies, texts.

Inscription. As both ANT and literacy scholars would appreciate, texts are often the intermediaries that hold together and strengthen interconnections in networks. Inscriptions are "concrete traces that represent phenomena in stable and circulable ways" (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 146). Texts are often what hold together networks; called *immutable mobiles*, they can "circulate from one locale to another while resisting deformation" (Latour, 1987, p. 227). In data collection for this study, I sometimes traced single texts that were particularly persistent in networks, like a viral video or a logo. However, because texts proliferated in these networks, I more often found myself tracing texts by type, as recommended by Spinuzzi (2008):

> Inscriptions provide a way to fix, record, and dominate phenomena by capturing representations. But for these inscriptions to circulate more widely and regularly, and for them to interact in predicable ways with other inscriptions, they can't be entirely idiosyncratic. Types of inscriptions tend to develop over time with particular activities to meet recurrent needs. These genres provide a developmental, stabilizing influence on human activity… And tracing them allows us to examine how they circulate through and build networks of activity. (p. 146)

Following his example, I traced and coded recurring genres in the network. Interestingly, these genres often overlapped across cases, adding to my confidence that these genres were common sources of stabilities for successful network builders.

Deflation. It is not just the presence of lots of inscriptions that leads to power. As Latour's (1986b) essay "Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together" theorized, inscriptions on their own might only succeed in being overwhelming. (This was something I appreciated first-hand in data collection, tracing social media archives that stretched back for years. They were immediately overwhelming.) Something must be done to them, Latour suggested. The powerful network builder dominates the inscriptions—bringing together or accumulating lots of other places distant in space and time, and then presenting them "synoptically to the eye" (p. 10). To do so, inscriptions are re-circulated and compacted through *deflation*; that is, multiple descriptions are accumulated and "arrayed in cascades" (p. 26), which trend "toward simpler and simpler inscriptions that mobilized larger and larger numbers of events in one spot" (p. 17). This is associated with power: "Positive feedback will get under way as soon as one is able to muster a large number of mobile, readable, visible resources at one spot to support a point" (p. 12). For example, Latour observed in scientific lab work how "bleeding and screaming rats" were extracted into "tiny set of figures" (p. 16); and as lab work was transformed into ever-more compact figures, drawings, numbers, writing, etc., the scientists facts became convincing. In Latour's estimation, the tinier (the more mobile, durable, and combinable) these inscription became, the better. "Files of files can be generated and this process can be continued until a few men consider millions as if they were in the palms of their hands" (p. 26).

Discovering Latour's essay on during data collection and ongoing analysis, I noted right away the parallels between the cascading phenomenon he'd described and what I was seeing in my cases, as my focal participants seemed to routinely compile texts into ever-more compact forms. For example, in one case, it was common practice for a father and daughter to accumulate events, photos, videos, texts, etc. over time on Facebook, and then compile them into a montage video summing up weeks of event-related activity in a few minutes of easy-to-watch and share moving images. Across cases, I observed that months of activities and hundreds of allies would get folded into ever-more shareable, compact media. I wondered: How did the genres relate to each other? In what timing and what rhythm did they cascade? Did they progressively fold in more allies? Did these performances help publics hold together, stay together, or get back together when they came apart? I pursued these questions by adding deflation to the list of constructs (described in this chapter) that guided my attention and analysis in this study. To sum up, these constructs were: *publics*, *translation*, *delegation*, *inscription*, and *deflation*.

Review of Literature

The current study was undertaken in effort to contribute to literacy studies' knowledge base concerning children writers and their networked, public writing. So that this study would build on other research, I conducted a review of the literature in the area. This review focused on research related to how children conceptualize distributed audiences on the internet, and how children write to engage them. This review encompassed empirical, peer-reviewed studies located through database searches (i.e., GoogleScholar, JSTOR, ERIC). In these searches, I specified keywords relevant to age (i.e., child, kid, young, children, youth), networking (i.e., network, digital, online, virtual, SNS, ICT, web, email, network, internet), and literacy (i.e., literacy, literacies, read/reading, write/writing, text). I also searched select literacy journals using combinations of key word and hand searches (i.e., *Research in the Teaching of English, Journal of Literacy Research, Reading Research Quarterly, Journal of Early Childhood Literacy,* and *Language* Arts). I found further studies by following citations from bibliographies and Google

Scholar.

I focused this search on studies that addressed children (ages 13 and under), distributed (e.g., people they met online who were otherwise unknown to them), and children who described or engaged in discursive relations with distributed audiences on the internet. I defined discursive relations as the production and sharing of alphabetic texts (e.g., I did not review studies in which children were just reading online). I also limited my search to self-organized settings (e.g., outside school or after school). In the latter decision, this review is designed to supplement earlier reviews on children's uses of technology that have focused on school settings (Burnett, 2010; Merchant, 2008).

Children's Understandings of Distributed Audiences on the Internet

How do children conceptualize distributed audiences on the internet? What has been studied most about children's regard for people they don't know online on the internet concerns whether they perceive them as being safe or dangerous. A foundational series of studies in this area come from Yan (2005, 2006, 2009), whose mixed-methods research studied the extent to which children's understandings of the social complexities of the internet were developmental in nature. Yan (2005) interviewed children (ages 5-12) and adults in the United States. He asked them questions like "What kinds of good things could the internet do for us?," "What kinds of bad things could the internet do to us?," and "Do you need to be careful about when you go to WWW?") (pp. 390-391). Findings indicated that age was the strongest predictor of children's understandings of social complexity, well beyond other variables (i.e., frequency of internet use, duration of internet use, informal internet classes).

Subsequent variations of this study (Yan, 2006; 2009) supported the hypothesis that children have "limited understanding" of the social consequences of the internet (Yan, 2009, p. 105). Surprisingly, however, when Yan (2009) measured social understanding against criterion (rather than norms), he found that adolescents and even adults also had "limited knowledge" of the internet's social complexities. Nonetheless, age was determined to be the dominant effect, reinforcing the researcher's earlier conclusions that "it is not easy for young minds to figure out how complex the Internet really is" (Yan, 2006, p. 419). However, Yan (2005) also issued this precaution in interpreting these findings: because the school where the study took place used filters on their computers, it was possible that *naïve* understandings of the internet were actually associated with having had *filtered* online experiences. Notably, over time Yan's recommendations shifted away from the use of restrictive filtering software and websites protected from "external intrusions" (Yan, 2005, p. 394), and toward more emphasis on giving children direct experiences with the internet. He eventually called for helping kids make their online experiences reflective and thoughtful, and for there to be explicit teaching before, during, and after risky online encounters.

Dodge, Husain, and Duke (2011) later used some questions similar to Yan regarding good and bad things about the internet. They interviewed 37 Kindergarten through second grade children in the United States to assess their understandings of technical and social aspects of the internet in the context of emerging state educational technology standards for children. They found that 78% of children recognized there were good things about the internet, while only 42% recognized there were bad things. However, many children had difficulty specifying what any of those things were. These researchers concluded that children had still-emergent understandings and were "not fully aware of the social and ethical issues regarding the internet" (p. 96). Like Yan, they also suggested that the appearance of children's understandings as being limited could also be due to the limitations of the children's websites they were accessing.

Similarly, Ey and Cupit (2011) also found that children had difficulty spontaneously recalling dangers on the internet. However, this study of 57 Australian children (ages 5-8) also tried prompting children as to what they would do in response to different dangerous scenarios. Cued this way, the majority of children offered appropriate management strategies (e.g., stopping interaction and removing themselves). In response to these scenarios, almost all children identified that it was "dangerous" to put their personal information on the internet, and that it was "dangerous" to speak to someone who asks to talk to them alone without an adult. However, almost half of the children considered it "not dangerous" to meet up with people they know only from the internet. Those who felt it was "dangerous" suggested reasons that the people might be bad (e.g., thieves or kidnappers), or strangers they don't know, or tricksters (e.g., "They might be bad people") (p. 60). Those who felt it was "not dangerous" suggested the people might be nice or pleasant to them, or that they might believe that they know them, or might offer them invitations to parties or outings (e.g., "Yeah it's okay, my aunty met her boyfriend on the internet, then she married him") (p. 59). Researchers interpreted as naïve the children's feelings that they knew the other people they were interacting with online; assumptions that these were also children; appreciation of attractive invitations; and assumptions other people could be trustworthy. They concluded: "Children's responses demonstrate naïveté and trust which is likely to place them in jeopardy if they are not educated to recognize the risk" (p. 63).

Taken together, these studies suggest that children have limited social knowledge of the internet. However, they also suggest that the quality of children's internet experiences may be a factor in these limited understandings. They collectively call for educators to engage children in safety education and help them develop a cautious approach to the internet. These findings, however, are complicated by qualitative evidence from in-depth interviews with children—

namely, in the recent dissertation of Ranjana Das at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Das (2011) found that younger children were actually *more* cautious than teens. She studied how children imagine other authors and readers in social networks like Facebook. Interviewing children and adolescents (ages 11-18) in the United Kingdom, Das found that preteens were cautious, skeptical, and in general hesitant about other users "out there" (p. 162). She also interviewed a child who expressed that other people "out there" could be protective, because they might do things like report things that were offensive to authorities on Facebook. Children who were a bit older (early teens) also differentiated between categories of other people: "people they want to get to know, people out there to get into trouble, and people they would perhaps want to 'try' out with guarded curiosity" (p. 162). They saw possibilities in adding new friends (e.g., "I'll add him to see if he's nice, if not I can always delete him can't I?"). Children demonstrated awareness that things could go wrong, but also a sense of novelty about adding new people and seeing how they might be as friends. Some had a sense of competition as well, eager to acquire larger numbers of friends. Others were more critical of sharing too much personal information. Difference in awareness like these varied by age and by individual experience.

A caveat to children's skepticism about other people was this: they were notably very trusting of the author or brand of the system itself. Children imagined an author behind the big social media networks (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Bebo) —someone "powerful, distant, unknown… who knows everything and can use this knowledge for a range of ends" (p. 156). As Rishona put it, "The head of Facebook can see everything," just like "the school can see anything you've done on your computer—not your home computer, but the school computer" (p. 158). Or as Julia told her peer, "You can't change Facebook… Facebook doesn't belong to us"

(p. 157). This idea of a single, unknown person with a powerful machine shifted among early and mid-teens to the idea of an unknown, powerful system, and eventually as a commercial system of working people who are fallible and trying to compete in the world.

In sum, Das' in-depth, qualitative findings complicate the findings of other studies in this area. Her findings indicate that children may have complex (even if not always correct) understandings of social complexities online, and also that that younger children may actually be more cautious than their older peers (contrary to conventional wisdom). Unlike those who concluded children were simply naïve (Ey & Cupit, 2011), these findings suggest that they are strategic, as they proceed online with a sense of both what could go wrong as well what possibilities could result. In their nuances, I think Das' stories of trust and power relations problematize reductive descriptions of social relations as "dangerous" and "not dangerous". It may well be that young writers' challenges when it comes to understanding new relations online are not qualitatively different from the challenges of adults; it seems likely that we are all developing awareness of how to think about other people on the internet.

This may draw into question the clear developmental hierarchy suggested by earlier research in this area—a hierarchy that is still implied in curricular models (e.g., Common Core, 2010) that suggest children are not ready for meaningful interaction online until they are older. Further research in this area is indicated. In particular, we need investigations that move beyond studies safe/dangerous dichotomies, and that avoid making judgments about children's general capabilities on the basis of questioning children whose internet uses are limited, and who thus have limited opportunities to develop more complex social understandings.

Children and Distributed Audiences at Play: Limits and Literacies in Children's Virtual Worlds

How do children engage distributed audiences online in sites designed for children? Literacy studies addressing this question have mostly investigated children in virtual worlds. Virtual worlds are immersive simulations that typically feature opportunities for children to represent themselves with an avatar, locate themselves in a virtual home environment, and interact with each other (Marsh 2012a). They are immersive simulations designed expressly to offer children a space and capacity for social interaction (Carrington, 2012). They take advantage of the affordances of the internet, offering children opportunities to extend their social lives beyond their immediate locales (Black, 2010). Literacy studies have examined these worlds through content analyses and through observations of children's in-world gameplay.

Content analyses have suggested that children's virtual worlds limit children's opportunities to use language to make meaningful connections to other people they meet in the game. For example, studies of both *Webkinz World* (Black, 2010) and *BarbieGirls* (Carrington & Hodgetts, 2010) reported that the sites restricted players to pre-set conversational subjects and phrases; even less restricted chats were still reductive opportunities to communicate (Black & Reich, 2011). Carrington (2012) reported that chats in *BarbieGirls* were monitored and policed, while girls' daily activities were surveilled and regulated in the "closed and limited social space" (p. 47). Concerning the same virtual world, Carrington and Hodgetts (2010) concluded that it was mentoring into a kind of troubling "literacy-lite;" that is, into "a literacy that is static and controlled; a literacy that takes place online but does not reflect any of the powerful identity and community practices with text made possible via Web 2.0" (p. 681). Rather than affording participation in knowledge-sharing, problem-solving, and networked interactions, children's content is strictly controlled and children's communications are limited by design (Black, 2010).

One notable exception that offered children meaningful opportunities to share in extended, networked ways online was through an off-site blog connected to the gaming space, *Chimpoo* (Carrington, 2012). In this more open space, Carrington noted that children were treated as competent users of peer-to-peer networking opportunities with awareness of their risks, potentials, and responsibilities in online communities.

However, observational studies of children's actual interactions in virtual worlds suggest that even within constraints, children can agentively use language to establish and maintain social networks with distributed other. Jackie Marsh (2011; 2012a; 2012b) studied users of *Club Penguin*, a virtual world representing Antarctica with penguins as children's avatars. Her data included surveys and interviews with children (ages 5-11) as well as in-home filming of three children (age 11) as they played in the virtual world. Marsh's central finding was that children used literacy to develop a more stable social order from what might otherwise be a random, chaotic social world.

Children initiated social networks through repetitive and ritualistic uses of literacy with known and unknown interlocutors, individually (one-to-one) and in groups (one-to-many). For example, in order to attract the general public to their igloos, children placed avatar penguins in central locations and then wrote phrases like, "Fashion show at my igloo!" (Marsh, 2012a, p. 12). Children also sent in-game messages to other users. When encountering unknown avatars, children routinely read each other's avatar profile and then invited friendship with a postcard if they felt comfortable. Some communication attempts were unsuccessful. Some direct questions from unknown users were frequently ignored (though children did not see this as upsetting). Children also engaged each other in ritualistic play; for example, by gathering on icebergs and attempting to tip them by jumping or drilling. When one avatar called out a phrase (e.g., "Tip it!"), the others repeated it (Marsh, 2012b, p. 83). Children also established relations using emoticons. Sally, for example, applauded and clicked on a smiley face emoticon to cheer for other avatars performing on a stage so that they would want to play with her.

Marsh suggested that through these uses of literacy in virtual worlds, children were inducted into social networking and the skills and understandings they needed in their digital lifeworlds moving forward. These brief interactions represent the most detailed instances, and only one of two studies identified in this review, that observe at the level of language how children position themselves and build relations with distributed audiences online.

In these data, there are also examples of children's adoption of differing stances toward distributed audiences. For example, Marsh (2011) illustrated the divergence of John and Emily's interactions with others in the game. John, whose family had little economic capital and was not a paid member of the site, spent most of his time alone and usually visited other igloos when their users were absent. John explained that he hesitated to accept new friends in the game if their name sounded "weird or not right… I have only got one friend" (p. 111). By contrast, Sally approached friend requests quite differently: "I just click on anybody" (p. 108); and, unlike John, she also enjoyed much more social and cultural capital in the game. Emily, the only paid user of the game, had a wide network of friends. Paid membership gave her displays of capital in the game, and access to members-only events and parties that would allow her to move through the game in an exclusionary way. Though children were all accessing the same virtual world, the ways in which they initiated or managed meeting new people was different based on their social, economic, and cultural capital. The influence of commercialization appears keenly here, reminding us that controlled sites that keep some people in, and some people out, may serve the interest of game makers, but not necessarily children who might otherwise be learning to network.

Outside of commercial sites like this, there do exist fandom sites where users can interact with each other more freely. Marsh (2012a) found that in these more open interactional spaces children could search for texts made by other children around the globe, share comments, exchange jokes and stories, and extend their communities of practice. For example, children produced and exchanged screen capture videos (machinima) of gameplay on YouTube. Though not the focus of her study, Marsh's (2011) survey results show that even more so than virtual worlds, children were using public sites like Google and YouTube. Like Carrington's (2012) finding that there were more generative practices on the public sites outside *Chimpoo*, these survey results and fan sites support the idea that children's interactions in more public spaces on the internet are worthy of further exploration as they may engage more Web 2.0 practices and more diverse visitors.

A final study of virtual worlds in this review is an interesting non-example—a missed interaction with new people. In a study of an after-school club, Wohlwend, Zanden, Husbye, & Kuby (2011) observed two 7-year-olds repeatedly attempting to arrange a multi-player game in *Webkinz World*. During this process, researchers noted that one player was so focused on searching for his friend in the club that the "unknown avatars became obstacles like furniture, something to maneuver around" (p. 157). This finding may suggest that using virtual worlds in school-like settings (where immediate friends are co-present) might orient users *away* from the new people they would otherwise gravitate toward in virtual worlds. In order to design pedagogy for digital delivery, then, we will need to understand more about how to create environments where children can become oriented toward distant resources, rather than always relying on the resources that happen to be in the room with them.

Risks and Resources: Children and Literacies in Public

How do children engage distributed audiences in public sites on the internet? There are a handful of studies in this area. They suggest there are differences among children in their willingness and ability to connect with distant resources.

Burnett and Wilkinson (2005) interviewed six children (approximately ages 10-11) in the United Kingdom who were frequent, experienced users of the internet outside school. They pursued interests and hobbies in children's sites as well as sites intended for general audiences. None mentioned difficulties negotiating general sites, although direct communication|chat was forbidden by their parents. Nonetheless, the children's descriptions revealed they were accessing multimedia resources and entering interest communities they were unlikely to have encountered face-to-face. Some reported communicating with their heroes and becoming active in the wider world. For example, Ella adopted and sponsored a leopard, and then returned repeatedly to the Leopard Trust site to continue her participation with the expectation that it would be updated often. Other children accessed sites to gain the kind of unofficial information they would get from friends (e.g., game reviews or cheat codes). In one case, Michael searched online for a random term he had made up just to see if anyone on the internet shared his sense of humor (i.e., "I drew this circle on a page and then I put a cross in it and I said, 'Oh look, holy lemon'. So I put 'holy lemon' in a search engine and it came up with this site…") (p. 161). In this study, children indicated a preference for exploratory public searches to the "child-friendly" searches at their school with filtering software, which they found frustrating and less effective. Like other children (Ey & Cupit, 2011), they articulated management strategies for self-monitoring and assessing (un)suitable resources. Even with constraints, these learners were curious and enthusiastic seekers of like-minded communities. Their expectations of the internet were that it would provide them access to people who shared their interests and shared their resources.

Turning next to blogs, Carrington's studies have shown child bloggers engaged in purposeful, productive, and public self-display and interaction. For example, Johnathan (age 13) demonstrated awareness of multiple audiences, writing in address to his peers while also inviting new people to comment. He also took risks with self-representation of identity that he might have been unlikely to take otherwise (i.e., "I think pink is a good color… no offence [sic]… if you think pink is a good color email me at …" [sic]) (Carrington, 2008b, p. 470). At the time of that study, blogging was relatively new, and Johnathan's comments were modest (a total of three). However, in ensuing years, Carrington's research on young bloggers has shown children interacting with more expansive audiences.

One study (Carrington, 2008a) highlighted two examples of kids doing that kind of interaction. The first was Raghda in Baghdad (age 13), and the second was Dylan (age 11). Both girls clearly demonstrated awareness as they consciously withheld their personal information online (e.g., photo or last name). However, they also demonstrated high-levels of risk-taking that gained them supporters and resources. In Raghda's case, she blogged about cats and life in Baghdad. Though she began writing in Arabic, she switched to English to correspond with the large numbers of other children and adults commenting from around the world. For Raghda, who was writing at the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003, the blog became a link to the rest of the world's concern (with war) and interests (in cute cats). A similar case in the United States showed how Dylan, a vlogger (video blogger), connected with many other people as a source of support. They commented on her blog. They cross-referenced her blog. They subscribed to her posts by RSS so they knew when she'd published. They even sent money to help her get to a vlogger (video blogger) conference, and asked their own networks to send money too. Thus, we can see Dylan was risk-taking and engaging in entrepreneurial literacy practices in relation to a distributed audience. Carrington concluded that texts and technologies now allow children to become producers and disseminators of information too, and remind us that “children do, in fact, take part in the same world(s) as adults” (p. 163).

Finally, turning this review toward research on social networking forums, case studies have suggested contradictory experiences among children sharing in public. Curwood (2013) conducted an ethnographic study of online affinity space that included Jack, an Australian boy whose devotion to the *Hunger Games* series involved him a massive, online affinity space that millions of people have accessed across more than 50 fan sites worldwide. At just 12 years old, Jack was an active participant in fan discussion boards, a staff member, and global moderator who posted over 1,800 comments in about six months. Jack also founded an official support site for an alternative reality game/social network, and he produced blogs and podcasts that responded to the needs of other players: “On any given day, Jack might have been managing his international staff of four, computer programming, marketing, writing, researching, and interacting with others in the Hunger Games fandom” (Curwood, 2013, p. 424). Jack was not only a user of portals to affinity spaces (fan websites, social networks, digital texts, games, etc.), he was also a designer of them (Curwood, 2013). By far, Jack represents the most advanced example in the current literature of a young person’s literacy practices in a distributed network. Based on what network theorists tell us about who will be most successful in network society, Jack’s ability to assemble ad-hoc groups bodes well for his future.

At the other end of the spectrum are cases of children who are hesitant to participate in wider online communities. Kafai, Fields, and Burke (2010) studied young people’s entry into a thriving online social networking forum for programmers. Designed initially for use in informal settings with children (ages 8-16), the Scratch forum is enormously popular among all ages (see http://scratch.mit.edu/about). Designers come to upload, download, remix, comment, make friends with other designers, etc. with goals of collaborating and locating affinity groups of others who share their interests. In this study, researchers described two African-American learners (age 12). In Matthew's case, he was quick to sample content and engage other creators in the online community, but was never confident to share his own work. In Lucetta's case, she initially avoided going online for ideas of support, even when encouraged to do so. Though eventually she began to participate by uploading and commenting in the community, she would never remix other people's projects. Later, in a school setting, she was observed wondering aloud repeatedly about whether she was even allowed to get on the internet. Researchers also observed other children like Lucetta who remained cautious about participating in this online community. They concluded that children's hesitancy requires further investigation.

Notably, these cases of Matthew and Lucetta contrast starkly with the cases of the enthusiastic bloggers described by Carrington (2008a), those "young people who feel a legitimate right to comment on the world around them" (p. 163). It is worthy of a pause here, for educators particularly, on the distance between cases like Jack and Lucetta. Jack was freely contacting others far and wide in order to take and make opportunities, and was by age 13 already a designer of social networks for global, public audiences (Curwood, 2013). Meanwhile, Lucetta was having to ask permission for even basic access to the internet in her school; and even when she had access, she was hesitant and not confident as a designer of online social worlds. This suggests further inquiry is needed on children online who feel they have a legitimate right to comment on the world around them, and how they come to develop and exercise that right.

Discussion

When taken together, these studies revealed areas of promise for future research in this area, as well as gaps in research. Next, I address those concerns, and how the current study was designed to respond to them.

Distributed Audiences May Not Be "Strangers" So Much As They Are Opportunities. Though research studies label social relations on the internet as "dangerous" or "not dangerous," children's responses suggest they understand their social worlds differently than that. Rather, children's understandings seem nuanced and complicated in ways that research is only beginning to uncover, as we are finding out that children may be strategically managing both risks and opportunities online. These findings should, I think, call into question the assumption that children are immature, naïve, or limited in understanding simply because they believe other people could possibly be trustworthy, or because they feel like they really know the other people they meet online. Are those trusting feelings developmental inadequacies, or are they mindsets that will help children thrive in this network society? Many children are conscious of the need to self-monitor and to use strategies to manage interactions with people that they do not know. Like the adults and researchers in their lives, children surely value their safety. There is no question that safety education is recommended. However, children seem to be telling us across these studies that there is more to understand than just risk on the internet; there is also opportunity.

Children are not alone or misguided in thinking that there may be good reasons to explore the risks and opportunities that come with writing to new, distributed public audiences. Empirical research supports this. The largest study of children's internet use yet conducted, called EU Kids, surveyed 25,142 children (ages 9-16) across 25 European countries; the researchers found that opportunities and risks go hand in hand (Livingstone et al., 2011). They found that "risky explorers" (whose average age was 13.5) tried out the widest range of activities on the internet (including advanced or creative activities like file-sharing and blogging); though they weren't the oldest group of children identified in the study, they nonetheless took the most risks. But at the same time, they were the least likely group to be upset by their online experiences (p. 40). So, rather paradoxically, children who are *most* likely to encounter risks were actually *less* likely to encounter actual harm.

According to both children and to researchers, then, there is good reason for us to learn more about how to support children in expanding their engagements online. As yet, we know very little about children's understandings of new people on the internet (outside of studies oriented toward danger and harm). If we are ever to risk children's public writing in schools, it will be because we have envisioned the opportunities publicness makes possible. In effort to contribute to such envisionment, the current study was designed to shine a light on networked publics and their opportunities for children.

Different Mindsets Toward Digital Delivery May Develop Early. Perhaps the most startling evidence in this review is not what children *do* on the internet, but what they *don't* do on the internet. In Marsh's study (2011), Jack wouldn't accept friend requests or answer messages from people with names he didn't recognize. Similarly, in Curwood's (2013) study, Lucetta and her classmates were reticent to contact others in the Scratch community.

These findings seem to underscore the continuing participation gap (Jenkins et al., 2006) among learners. First, they reflect that children's uptake of opportunities for networking online may be unequal even at early ages. This problematizes curricular standards like the Common Core (2010) that advise waiting until Grade 11 to make corresponding with others online at part of schooling. Second, these findings reflect that even with access to the internet and networking, some young people will hesitate. This underscores what new literacies studies have long known—that developing our new literacies is not only about adopting new tools, but also about adopting new mindsets (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). As such, if we are to redress inequities in children's opportunities for developing wider networks, research and pedagogy need to learn much more about how children develop valued ways with digital delivery. However, as yet, this area of research is still emerging. Thus, the current study was designed to investigate children at young ages (ages 13 and under), and to observe their development of valued strategies for digital delivery that will afford them access to people, resources, and further opportunity.

Meaningful Social Relations Become More Evident In Public and In Situ. Though virtual worlds are the most researched, studies repeatedly suggest these sites have limitations for meaningful literacy development, or for developing valuable ways of sharing and participating that are important to networking (e.g., Black, 2010; Black & Reich, 2011; Carrington & Hodgetts, 2010). Some researchers (e.g., Carrington, 2012a; Marsh, 2012b) suggest the promise of looking beyond restrictive just-for-kids sites, and toward more open sites where children share texts publicly. Further, studies of children's online engagements with new people show that, when we observe interaction in situ, it becomes evident how children use language in meaningful ways online; for example, they use written communication to establish and maintain social relations, and they develop valued networking practices as members of online communities (e.g., Carrington, 2005; 2008a; Curwood, 2013; Marsh, 2011; 2012a; 2012b).

In the end, this review identified just six research projects observing children's literacies in situ as they relate to wide audiences, and only two of these six studies included examples of children's written communications. This study was designed to respond to those gaps in research by examining how children's online uses of discourse to construct meaningful social relations, and looking beyond sites just-for-kids to appreciate children's participation in public life more broadly.

Chapter 3: Research Design

This investigation was undertaken to give insight into how children's networked publics are performed, and so suggest how these insights might inform our innovations in writing pedagogy to support the digital, distributed, public work of writers and writing today. To achieve these dual ends—insight and innovation—this study was designed to follow the development of widely-distributed and digitally-connected publics as they are performed by young writers, their parents, and a world of other people and things online. Concluding Part I of this dissertation, the following Chapter 3 describes this study's methodology and methods, and why and how they were employed to generate empirical answers to this study's three research questions:

- **On Distribution:** How did young writers distribute texts in such a way that they summoned and maintained a networked public?
- **On Circulation:** How and why did networked publics circulate young writers' texts?
- **On (De|Re)Stabilization:** What were sources of instabilities in children's networked publics? How were those instabilities negotiated?

Research Methodology

This investigation was designed as a qualitative, performative multiple-case study. Methodologically, it was informed by performative case study and multi-sited ethnography. Respectively, these research approaches are oriented toward the study of processes and mobilities. As such, they are suited to this investigation's queries concerning how texts are distributed and circulated, and how networked publics hold together even across distance and time.

Developed by Hansen (2011) performative case study translates actor-network theory (ANT) into a methodology for case research. Drawing on Latour (1986b), Hansen underscored that ANT has a performative definition of reality. It assumes that while things are real and exist, “their meanings and social roles are constantly reconstructed in practice each time they are mobilized” (Hansen, 2011, p. 118). Reality is thus accessed in practice, not in principle. Knowledge, too, is understood as being performed. It is always situated, fragmented, and partial. As such, Hansen suggests the researcher both constitutes and describes her object of study.

The intent of the performative study is not *to know that*, but *to know how* (Ryle, 1949/2000). Thus performative investigations produce descriptions of the ″fragile, fluid, and multiple characteristics” of a social phenomenon as performed (Hansen, 2011, p. 131). In doing so, they illustrate “the power of practice,” or “how theoretical abstractions or conceptualizations are always conditioned, altered, and transcended by practice” (p. 120). As Latour (2005) explains, ANT research must perform the social:

> If the social is something that circulates in a certain way, and not a world beyond to be accessed by the disinterested gaze of some ultra-lucid scientist, then it may be *passed along* by many devices adapted to the task—*including* texts, reports, accounts, and tracers… Can the materiality of a report on paper… *extend* the exploration of the social connections a little bit *further*?... If the social is a trace, then it can be *re*traced; it’s an assembly then it can be *re*assembled. (pp. 127-128)

Thus, the task becomes “to see whether the *event* of the social can be extended all the way to the *event* of them reading through the medium of the text” (p. 133).

As a performative case study, this study was designed to produce detailed descriptions of how children’s networked publics get connected and mobilize. By staying close to the details, and performing a kind of guided tour of the networked publics for readers, in the hopes that its experiential quality will allow researchers and educators to gain purview and attachment to a lesser-known, abstract phenomenon experience. The desired outcome of this performative case study is as much an experience as it as "thing" to be carried away.

Another methodological principle for this study (and central to ANT) is to *follow the actors* (Hansen, 2011). This comes from Latour's (2005) oft-cited advice to the enquirer:

> to 'follow the actors themselves', that is try to catch up with their often wild innovations in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands, which methods they have elaborated to make it fit together, which accounts could best define the new associations that they have been forced to establish. (p. 12)

To follow the actors, the researcher aims to "render visible the long chains of actors linking sites to one another without missing a single step" (Latour, 2005, p. 173). As Fenwick & Edwards (2010) explain, "ANT focuses upon the tiniest mundane details… to trace the micro-movements through which little humdrum bits, human and non-human, negotiate their joinings (or their un-doings) to assemble the messy things we often try to ignore or explain away" (p. 146).

This is similar to what multi-sited ethnographers do. As introduced by Marcus (1995), multi-sited or mobile ethnographies are "designed around chains, paths, thread, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations" (p. 105). Drawing on Latour, Marcus suggests one useful approach for multi-sited ethnographers is to follow not only humans but also things. In this study, the things I follow are discursive and digital in nature (online texts) whose traces are recorded in the algorithms of other kinds of digital things (web aggregators and search engines). Rather than jumping to structures or invisible agencies (Latour, 2005), I track everyday details. By following these, I hope to better understand how texts circulate, and join together, to create networked publics.

Research Methods

In studies using ANT, methods of research are commonly ethnographic and may involve the researcher "meticulously track[ing] specific, material everyday detail" (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010, pp. 145). These methods are familiar to literacy studies, where we take a special interest in close observations of language-in-use. This qualitative research thus features ethnographic methods. It also adds to them some digital methods for tracking how things spread online. As shown in Table 3.1, this study was conceptualized as having four phases common to qualitative research: *field siting*, *data collection*, *data analysis*, and *evaluation*. Next, I discuss the research activity that accompanied each phase.

Table 3.1

Overview of Research Phases

Phase	Focus	Tasks	Data Sources
Phase 1	Field siting	• Immersion • Setting criteria • Chain sampling • Recruiting • Obtaining informed consent	• Internet artifacts • Field notebooks
Phase 2	Data collection	• Interviewing • Tracking • Describing	• Interviews • Internet artifacts • Field notebooks
Phase 3	Data analysis	• Mapping • Memoing • Coding	• Internet artifacts • Field notebooks • Interviews
Phase 4	Evaluation	• Assessing	• Field notebooks • Reader feedback

Phase 1: Field Siting

The primary purpose of Phase 1, Field Siting, was to identify cases of children's networked publics to pursue for this investigation. Case selection was guided by the ANT design principle of following the actors themselves (Latour, 2005). As such, potential cases were identified by following people who participate in networked publics, and people who study circulation and the internet more generally, and allowing them to guide me to cases of interest or value. Rather than begin by defining field *sites*, I began by field *siting* (Leander and McKim, 2003) to identify how people create and articulate the social spaces of networked publics. I accomplished this initial field siting by undertaking two related, concurrent tasks, *immersion* and *chain sampling*.

Immersion. Following Hansen's (2011) advice to performative researchers, I first read across the scholarly domain literature to identify general concepts and concerns that case studies might serve to illuminate. This included scholarship related to digital delivery from composition studies, circulation studies, internet studies, and K-12 curriculum and pedagogy (see Chapters 1-2). I also sought out literature as a member of the editorial board for an issue of *Currents in Electronic Literacy* (Davis, 2013), which invited other scholars to query digital activism, a much-debated current topic relevant to digital delivery. Additionally, I immersed myself in insider experiences, as is recommended practice for ethnographic researchers (Emerson et al., 2011). This involved expanding my online engagements in networked publics by following listserves (e.g., Digital Media and Learning Hub, Association of Internet Researchers); by participating in webinars (e.g., Conversations in Literacy Research, TED); and by connecting to digital scholars via social media (e.g., Academia.edu. HASTAC, Twitter). During this process, I documented my emerging understandings and participation, and wrote for other researchers about the process of opening up one's scholarly work to wider audiences through open access publication (Roach & Gainer, 2013).

In addition to reading and personal experiences, my immersion also included a pilot study of one nine-year-old girl's networked public that had recently achieved international recognition. This helped me get a sense of how I might practically study and report on distribution, circulation, and (de|re)stabilization. I practiced capturing and tracking my research with online data, and I experimented with different ways of weaving together data with related concepts from the domain literature. These various immersion experiences—reading, personal experience, and pilot study—allowed me to gain enough initial understanding of networked publics to be able to identify and choose other cases of interest.

Setting criteria. Building on these immersion experiences, I next sought to identify three to six cases of children's networked publics for further study. In terms of criteria, I searched for networked publics that:

- Featured one or more children (ages 5-13)
- Assembled as a result of one or more children's online distribution of texts (alphabetic, and perhaps multimedia)
- Achieved wide and diverse circulation
- Developed its public presence initially and primarily through social media (vs. other media like television)
- Oriented toward opportunities for children and social good, rather than harm
    - Were recently active (in the current or previous calendar year)

By children, I meant people ages 5-13 years old. In thinking about children and the internet, it is commonplace to distinguish *tweens* (young people ages 9-12) from *teens* (young people ages 13-19), as reflected in current legislation and internet industry practice in the U.S. that treat children differently once they turn age 13. Following the logic of internet researchers who've questioned this boundary (Boyd et al., 2011), I purposefully included 13-year-olds so as not to reify the belief that 13 is the "magical age at which everything changes" (Age Restrictions and the Issue of Maturity, para. 5).

Chain sampling. To locate cases meeting these criteria, I engaged in *chain sampling*. This strategy for qualitative research involves locating well-situated informants, asking them to recommend cases, and then selecting cases that are commonly recommended (see Patton, 2002). Though it is commonplace in qualitative research to assume that our well-situated informants will be human, in this study I was influenced by ANT to appreciate that my initial informants were non-human: a blog-ranking algorithm, top social media news blogs whose contents are largely generated through web search algorithms, and the web search algorithm of algorithms that we call Google.

Consulting the Technorati and its top blogs. In a medium like the internet, largely defined by user-generated content, the volume and variety of potential cases of widespread circulation are countless. In order to determine which circulations would be good to study, I consulted the Internet as a collective. I did so in consideration of Shirky's (2008) explanation that in an era when everyone can publish, we now increasingly publish first and then filter; and this filtering process of separating the good from the mediocre is increasingly social and increasingly the result of crowdsourcing content among amateurs online.

To identify cases that had piqued the interests of the Internet at large, and social media in particular, I first needed a well-positioned, reputable informant that could help me know where I might begin to look for cases. Here, my well-positioned informant was the Technorati Authority, and it's popular web-based index of the most influential social media blogs online, the Technorati Top 100 (formerly available at http://www.technorati.com). Daily, this index sorted over 1.3 million blogs online, ranking sites' for the Top 100 most influential. This ranking was based on calculations of things like things like the rate of a blog's rising in traffic and the volume of other sites linking to a blog. For sampling purposes, I took up the five most influential sites suggested by the Technorati Top 100. Appendix A provides description information about the top five blogs generated in my pilot search, all of which were social media new and technology news aggregators: The Huffington Post, BuzzFeed, TechCrunch, Mashable, and The Daily Beast. I also verified that these top blogs nominated by Technorati were also recognized as being well-positioned according to measures from other ranking services too. Alexa Traffic Rank (http://www.alexa.com) recognized these blogs as being among the top 500 most trafficked sites in the United States, while QuantCast (https://www.quantcast.com) recognized them highly-trafficked sites too, ranging from 1-78 million visitors per month.

Following up on Technorati's recommendations, I took its top five blogs to be my next well-positioned informants. As suggested by their rankings, these widely-read social media news blogs were recognized sources of expertise on stories that had (or soon would) reach widespread circulation online. Their filters were based on what is attractive to human editors and/or their in-house algorithms for searching for news on the web. By virtue of having appeared on such highly trafficked blogs, the cases they might recommend to me would be understood as having already achieved the kind of widespread circulation that would make them suitable to this study.

I consulted these five blogs by searching their contents for particular cases they might recommend that would be relevant to this study. The internal search tools of these blogs were neither particularly robust nor comparable to one another, so I searched them using an external search engine, Google Advanced Search (https://www.google.com/advanced_search). I searched each of the five blogs in turn, specifying its domain name (e.g., huffingtonpost.com) and search parameters including: keyword phrases targeting 5-13 year olds (e.g., "x-year-old" from ages 5-13 or "x-grader"). I further sorted for sites that were in English and were recent (within most recent two calendar years). Given my interest in changing the conversation from harm to opportunities for children, I also used keywords to filter out the overwhelming proportion of media reports about children that were focused on tragedy, violence, sex, or unlawful behavior (e.g., custody, criminal, arrest, police). This approached generated search results that were reasonably sized to peruse for cases that might be relevant to this study (250 or fewer search results for each age groups queried (i.e., from "5-year-old" to "13-year-old").

In addition to these social media news sites, I also conducted a hand-search of the most comprehensive archives of viral circulations available online, the Internet Meme Archives (http://knowyourmeme.com). This site included nominations and data contributed by users and vetted by site editors. I also consulted the traffic analysis tool Topsy (http://topsy.com), which indexes trending topics in the public social media sphere.

Googling. Another important informant was the search engine Google (https://www.google.com), whose algorithm I used to conduct a broader search of the internet for possible cases. As an informant in this study, I appreciated that Google's search engine identifies pages that are well connected–in terms of the number of sites that link to them, and influence of the sites that link to them (Brin & Page, 1998). Thus, Google could help me identify sites that were recommended by internet users collectively, and by the internet's most well-connected internet users specifically.

In addition to the focused Google search, I tested a general browsing strategy to try to identify cases that might have received widespread attention online, but perhaps not have reached these social media news outlets. This strategy involved searching different combinations of key words related to topics of interest to this study (e.g., search strings including keywords "top bloggers" and "kids," or "inspiring" and "kids" and "making a difference". The results were myriad and often irrelevant to the needs of this study the volume and variety of such general search results made them collectively unwieldy. Further, the potential cases these searches turned up proved less likely to turn out to be truly widespread in circulation (per my criteria) vs. the more focused search method. I identified some potential cases by skimming results of these broad keyword searches on Google. However, I limited my time on this keyword approach to a couple of weeks only because of its overwhelming, inefficient, 'needle-in-a-haystack' nature.

My pilot search using all of the procedures yielded 144 potential focal cases for this study. I kept track of these on a running chart as I conducted searches; I added a new row for each search result that met at least two of my desired criteria and, thus, appeared promising for further inspection. Not all possible cases were charted, as the high volume of search results necessitated some degree of skimming results. My purpose was not to document the entirety of the field (a task that would have required a finer-grain of searching and greater systematicity and cross-checking); rather, my purpose was to identify cases that were rich enough in information for this study. I also gave priority to recording potential cases in which focal participants were from historically underrepresented groups (e.g., children of color, indigenous youth, inner-city youth, LGBTQ youth). These appeared in far fewer numbers than cases related to middle and upper-middle class white children and families.

To select among the many possibilities generated through chain sampling, my next step was to do *purposeful sampling* (Patton, 2002) to identify which cases among the many possible would be the strongest candidates for inclusion in this study. First, I chose some cases from my chart that seemed to be especially information-rich and relevant to the purpose of this study. I then Googled using within-case keywords. I used what I learned to complete a detailed entry in my running chart of potential cases to evaluate whether the case met all my criteria, or should be ruled out as a potential focal case. Some representative entries from my chart are displayed in Appendix B.

Recruiting. With promising focal cases identified, my next step was to recruit children and parents to participate in the study. I contacted them initially by emailing or sending a private message through social media. My messages were brief, informal introductions to the study and myself that were tailored to the age of the child I expected would read it. For those who responded, I arranged a time for an informal chat with the parent and child together, or just the parent (if they requested such).

These meetings took place over video chat through the internet, and on a few occasions involving just parents, by phone. Recruitment chats lasted approximately 15-30 minutes, and involved introductions to the study, introduction to each other, and opportunities to ask questions about the study. Through informal talk within a semi-structured format, I was able to confirm whether or not they met the criteria for the study. I was also able to ensure that our technologies for video chat were working (ahead of a formal interview). Most importantly, the recruitment chats served to build rapport and an initial level of trust, which seemed especially important to establish in this online setting. In some cases, participants were introduced to my own young children at the beginning or end of interviews, an unplanned but useful way to authenticate my identity while showing reciprocity: they were willing to let me meet their children and so I was willing to do the same.

Perhaps naively, I expected recruitment chats would result in my enrolling all or most of the focal cases I'd selected in my pilot search process. In fact, recruitment proved to be a challenge. I soon realized the magnitude of interest in these families. For example, in one case, a parent missed our scheduled time for the recruitment chat for a second and third time, and then I noted just after that he was posting photos on Twitter of his daughter meeting with the Speaker of the U.S. House of Congress and, another time, ringing the bell on Wall Street. This was the nature of recruiting focal participants who have massive networked publics: as celebrity increases, accessibility decreases. Several months passed after my pilot search and planning for the study, and the time when I was actually doing the recruiting for the IRB-approved study. In that time, the children I'd intended to study had since gotten too famous, their days filled to the brim with opportunities.

Table 3.2 shows a full overview of the case identification process, its search results, and the difficulties I encountered. Of the six focal cases identified in my pilot study, three were ruled out based on recruitment chats that revealed children weren't meaningfully engaged with the internet themselves or alongside their parents. The other three were eliminated after repeated problems scheduling recruitment chats; although participants were willing to participate, their abundance of opportunities made their follow-through unpredictable.

Table 3.2

Case Identification & Recruiting Process Overview

	Pilot Search	Case Search: Round 1	Case Search: Round 2
Date	Oct 2012	Apr-May 2014	Nov -Dec 2014
Main Approach to Searching	Google Advanced Search of Social Media News Blogs: • Huffington Post • Mashable • BuzzFeed • TechCrunch • Daily Beast	Google Advanced Search of Social Media News Blogs: • Huffington Post • BuzzFeed • Mashable • Business Insider • Gawker	Google Advanced Search of Social Media News Blogs: • Huffington Post • BuzzFeed • Mashable • Business Insider • Gawker
Additional Approaches	• Internet Meme Database • Topsy • Topical keyword Google search • Within-case keyword Google search	• Topical keyword Google search • Within-case keyword Google search • Site search on Huffington Post for keywords	• Topical keyword Google search • Within-case keyword Google search
Initial Results	144 kids/unique cases potentially meet criteria	131 kids/unique cases potentially meet criteria	54 kids/unique cases potentially meet criteria
Cases Invited	6 focal cases	7 focal cases	3 focal cases
Cases Fully Recruited	0 focal cases	2 focal cases	1 focal case
Difficulties Encountered in Recruiting	• No response to invitation (2) • Missed recruitment chats due to conflicts from overflowing schedules (2) • Interested during recruitment chat, but did not meet criteria for study (2)	• No response (1) • Deliberated but declined (2) • Expressed approval during recruitment chat but then fell out of touch (1) • Expressed approval during recruitment chat but busy schedule made follow-up efforts challenging and unreliable (1) •	• Timeline of current study could not incorporate large size and scope of last cases identified. Recruitment chats were successful, but interviews were postponed for future study. (2)

Revisiting case identification. Through these difficulties, I came to appreciate the importance of getting timing and access right in recruitment for these types of cases. Thus the start of data collection involved repeating the procedures about for searching cases to find the most recent possibilities, while also shifting my approach slightly. Rather than lean toward more famous examples, I leaned in the other direction: emerging and less famous cases. In my purposeful sampling, I explored possible cases that were some of the lesser known across my chart. Further, rather than choosing the names I'd charted as focal cases, I did several within-case searches of them in order to locate the names of children who might be doing similar things who had not (yet) reached the top tier of social media news. As such, they might be more accessible, and meet me in advance of their becoming 'famous.' [I am grateful to Dr. Joan Hughes and her graduate students in qualitative research at the University of Texas for their thoughtful suggestion of this response to my recruiting dilemma.]

Here is an example of how this strategy worked: I located one 15-year-old baseball blogger who had been recognized in social media news for a site he'd been developing since age 12; rather than take his already 'famous' story as a focal case, I searched his sites for mentions or connections to other children whose networks might be similar but still emergent. This approach led me to my second of the three focal cases, Matt's Bats; although the least famous of the three cases initially, it afforded me the most opportunity to watch a networked public in-the-making. The fact that all of them indeed rose while I watched gave me confidence in my search procedures accuracy in identifying the phenomenon I'd been looking to observe in the world. It also gave me confidence in the phenomenon as being not unique to these three cases. Even within a handful of social media blogs, I found hundreds of possible networks to explore.

In total, I repeated the case selection process described above three times

(Pilot, Round 1, Round 2) in order to finally arrive at the focal cases reported in this dissertation. Across these searches, I had identified 320 potential cases of interest, meeting two or more of the selection criteria. 16 cases were selected to be invited to the study, based on their promise as especially data-rich cases to explore, and based on their diversity (i.e., variation in gender, geography, race/ethnicity, social media platforms, areas of interest, duration of networks).

However, recruitment was continually fraught with challenges related to timing and access (Table 3.2 lists these difficulties). Unfortunately, these challenges impeded my attempts to recruit focal participants from underrepresented groups. I'd reached out to several, and had successful outcomes from recruitment chats in two cases I'd anticipated would be focal cases in this study—until they became suddenly very famous and fell out of contact or reliable contact. In future studies, this problem might be addressed through further searching for focal participants who aren't so famous, and recruiting them earlier in their development of networked publics.

In the end, I arrived at three focal cases for this dissertation study. These cases featured the focal children and parents I'd invited who were willing to participate and available to do so. Further, they were cases I could reasonably pursue in the time frame available for this study. After focal participants were successfully recruited, additional participants were selected over time as I followed the circulation of the focal children's networked public and identified other key participants in them.

In total, 43 participants were recruited to the study for interviews, and approximately one-third of these were children (n=15). Whether or not they were focal participants, with every child participant I conducted recruitment chats, interviewed the child (with a parent present), interviewed their parent (on a separate occasion), and collected online artifacts and field notes related to that child's own networked public participation online. There were notable overlaps between these children's perspectives and experiences; these sensitized me to key points for consideration within and across cases in analysis. Though not all the children interviewed could be the focus of this study, all of the children's interviews were compelling and led me into different networked publics. I expect to explore some of those in greater detail in future research and writing projects.

Obtaining informed consent. Children, parents, and adults whom I interviewed were considered participants in this study, and engaged in a process of providing informed consent. The broader range of people active in these networks online were not considered participants in the study, and were considered exempt from consent given the public nature of the comments that I sometimes wrote about or quoted briefly quoted (e.g., they were written for public audiences, displayed in public spaces). None of them were focal points of the cases, I kept my comments brief, and I remained mindful of the boundaries of fair use. I was also careful not to quote any postings that could foreseeably affect others adversely.

For the children in the study, informed consent had the relatively unusual stipulation that neither anonymity nor pseudonymity would be offered due to the already public nature of their online data. As standards are still emergent for ethical practice governing internet research online, and particularly the research of children's online activities (Dunkels & Enochsson, 2008), I planned to make ongoing decisions about participants' consent using the case-based, inductive process suggested by the Association of Internet Researchers (Markham & Buchanan, 2012; also see Ess et al., 2002). However, no sensitive topics arose during the study that presented conflicts to the children's real names being used. Even so, I opted to use only their first names because full names were not necessary, and it seemed better to err on the side of more privacy than less.

Looking across focal participants. Three children's networked publics became the focus of this investigation. At the time of the interview, these focal participants were: age 12 (Erik), age 10 (Matt), and age 11 (Kaylee). They all lived in the United States, and at present (or until fairly recently) in suburban communities. All were white, and socioeconomically middle or upper-middle class. All had ready access to the internet through a computer and mobile devices at home. All went to public schools.

Table 3.3 provides a comparative overview of the cases. In terms of their similarities, the children all initiated all networked publics at young ages (between the ages of 8-10). All networked publics had been in use for a significant period of time (from 2 years to 4 years of use), and were currently active at the time of the study. All had high levels of parent involvement, and two had parents with a background in marketing (one in social media marketing). All used multiple social media platforms (e.g., a combination of a blog and Twitter). And all had extraordinary amounts of subscribers across these platforms, no less than 1,000 per platform.

Table 3.3 also shows differences between the networked publics. They represented groups with different interests—from books, to sports, to philanthropy. They varied in the social media platforms they used—with two mainly using primarily a blog and Twitter, where the other used Facebook and YouTube more. Though they all had thousands subscribers, one had subscribers in more vast amounts (e.g., 14,000 subscribers on YouTube). Perhaps not surprisingly, the parent's role in this case was more dominant compared to other cases, as it related to his profession: internet marketing The child's role was as a co-founder and a creative lead on the project; she initiated the first video production independently, published it on social media independently, and then became the primary public relations face for the project, while her dad was responsible for coordinating and publicizing the project.

This was an important point for my learning, as throughout my case selections, I'd generally avoided cases involving children weren't the lead on everyday postings online. This final case, however, offered insight into what is perhaps more common among young people (and perhaps would be a more common model in classrooms). The child was a co-participant, side-by-side with an adult, co-creating and engaged in multiple aspects of publicity. Though not 'pushing the buttons' on social media, the child was very much aware of strategies for effective delivery on the internet. Further, having an adult as the primary person responsible for posting online, this case notably involved the most widespread audience and the most risk-taking. Across the cases, then, there was range of what children's roles in networked publics might look like, from more to less hands-on, from more to less scaffolding, and from more to less exposure to big audiences.

Table 3.3

Overview of Cases & Focal Participants

	This Kid Reviews Books	Matt's Bats	reKindle
Topic of Interest	Books	• Baseball • Washington Nationals	Philanthropy
Types of Participants	• Readers • Authors • Publishers	• Baseball fans • Media • Companies	• Charitable families • Corporate sponsors • Media professionals
Focal Child	12-year-old boy	10-year-old boy	11-year-old girl
Network Duration	4 years+ (Since Jan 2011)	3 years+ (Since Jul 2012)	2 years+ (Since Aug 2013)
Parent Involvement	High (Mom & Dad)	High (Mom & Dad)	High (Dad)
Child's Main Role	Social media	Social media	• In-person PR • Videos of events
Parent's Main Role	Admin support	• Admin support • Editors-in-Chief	• Social media • Video production • Event coordination • Non-profit dev.
Parent(s) Backgrounds	• Chemistry • Education	• Law • Accounting • Some marketing	Internet marketing
Primary Social Media Platforms	• WordPress blog • Twitter	• WordPress blog • Twitter	• Facebook • YouTube
Subscribers	• 4K subscribers (Blog) • 2K subscribers (Twitter) • 1K Subscribers (Facebook)	• 1.5K subscribers (Twitter) • Undisclosed (Blog)	• 14K subscribers (YouTube) • 4K subscribers (Facebook) • 1K Subscribers (Twitter)

Phase 2: Data Collection

The primary purpose of Phase 2, Data Collection, was to collect detailed, empirical evidence I'd need in order to produce in-depth descriptions of networked publics. I used three methods of data collection: 1) Interviewing; 2) Tracking; 3) Describing. Respectively, these methods allowed me to collect three types of data sources: 1) Oral conversations; 2) Online artifacts; 3) Observations. Table 3.4 overviews the types and amounts of data I collected. In this sections that follow, I detail how these methods of data collection were employed.

Table 3.4

Overview of Data Collection

	This Kid Reviews Books	Matt's Bats	reKindle	Total
Scope of Data Collection				
Data Collection Period	June 2014 - Sept 2014	Sept 2014 - Nov 2014	Dec 2014 - Jan 2015	8 Months
Time Spent in Data Collection (Approx.)	640 Hours	480 Hours	280 Hours	1,400 Hours
Interviews				
Interviews (w/ Transcripts)	18	12	7	37
Approx. Hours of Interview Data	20	18	12	50
Kids Interviewed (Ages 8-17)	8	6	1	15
Parents Interviewed	7	4	1 (Twice)	12
Other Adults Interviewed	7	6	3	16
Mapping				
Situational Maps	13	9	7	29
Memoing				
Unique Web Pages & Artifacts Memoed	1044	505	190	1,739
Research Log Pages (Single-Spaced)	202	141	87	430
Observational Memos	85	53	24	162
Coding				
Codes Applied in TAMS	3,223	2,024	2,164	7,411
Unique Codes	732	428	674	1,834

Interviewing. As shown in Table 3.4, data collection included the conduct of 37 interviews. All interviews were scheduled in advance, and separate days from one another. Interviews were ongoing, and scheduled across the length of data collection in response to promising leads, emergent themes, etc. Interviewees included: 15 Children, 12 Parents, and 16 other adults (Table 3.4). In total, approximately 50 hours of interview conversation were undertaken, and these were recorded in their entirety.

Interviews were used to gain participants' insights into networked publics related to this study's research three questions. Because there were seemingly infinite number of links that I could follow through these massive, distributed networks, interviews with participants were essential to help identify which connections might be most important to follow, based on participants identifying their most important moments—positive or negative.

Prior to the recorded interviews, I conducted preliminary chats with the participants (as above) to build rapport. During these, I asked them to recommend important sites and associations they had made through these networked publics. As I explained to the children, this would allow me to 'know where to start' and also to be able to 'do my homework' before our interview. My pre-interview 'homework' involved collecting data around whatever points of interest they'd recommended, and also reading more broadly and collecting data online to know more about the children and to identify specific points of interest in their online activity that might also be useful for me to ask them about.

Next, I generated a detailed plan for each interviewee. This followed the general set of procedures and questions I used with all focal children and parents (Appendix C1). However, the detailed plans modified this general template to included lists of individualized topics we might talk about. For each topic, I prepared a bulleted list of points of interest and related questions I could draw from flexibly as/if they fit into our conversation. This approach allowed the interviews to be more open conversations, with opportunities for participants to nominate topics for our conversation—the "highs" and "lows" and "ahas" of their experiences—while at the same time they could also be more focused conversations, because I had developed background knowledge ahead using the internet artifacts and was prepared with questions on any areas I anticipated they might bring into the conversation, or anticipated that I might choose to bring up if they didn't otherwise.

Semi-formal interviews were conducted online with all children and parents whose networks are the focus of each of the three cases. Each interview began with restatement of informed consent, and a review of the goals of the study and how the data would be used. In order to elicit what participants found valuable, interviews were arranged as semi-structured conversations (Salmons, 2010), using a responsive interviewing model that asks broad main questions, listens closely, and crafts follow-up questions responsively in the moment (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). As described above, prior to interviews, a preliminary recruitment chat was conducted to build rapport (Salmons, 2010; Yarrow, 1960), allowing children, parents, and me time to warm up to one another (Lobe, Livingstone, & Haddon, 2007) and become familiar with the interview environment (Yarrow, 1960). These also allowed us to ensure that our communication technologies were functioning properly. Children were assigned an expert role (Yarrow, 1960) and encouraged to elaborate on their talk with questions like, "Can you say more about that? Why was this important to you? What were you learning?"

Nearly all interviews were conducted through a video chat system, Skype (Microsoft, 2015). A handful of adults preferred to be interviewed by phone. In-person interviews might have been preferable; however, electronic interviews are accepted practice among internet researchers, and valued for the access they allow to geographically-dispersed participants without the time and expense of travel (see

Committee for Protection of Human Subjects, n.d.; Dunkels & Enochsson, 2008; Lobe et al., 2007; Salmons, 2010). They also allowed for visual authentication of the participants (Kozinets, 2010), allowing me to be sure that they were, in fact, children. Videoconference interviews were preserved with a screen-recording software, Call Recorder for Skype (Ecamm Network, 2015). Phone interviews were recorded with an iPhone app, TapeACall Pro (Epic Enterprises, 2015).

Following every interview, I immediately wrote up my initial observations (Patton, 2002) by typing and expanding handwritten notes from the interviews with embedded analytic notes (Corsaro, 1985). Then, a loose transcript of the recording was generated within the next day or two (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). For the children and parents who were focal participants in these cases, and would be quoted, I reviewed the transcripts for complete accuracy and sent them copies by email to review to ensure that the transcripts reflected what they'd hoped to convey, and to make any comments they'd like. On just one occasion, a parent requested I leave a piece of information off the transcript (and it was an aside, not pertinent to the study).

Following circulations. To investigate how networked publics assemble and stabilize as texts circulate online, I drew on research methods designed to follow the movements of people, things, and/or texts by *tracking* and *intercepting*.

Tracking. My approach to tracking texts was inspired by iconographic tracking, a qualitative, digital research method developed by Gries (2010; 2013; 2015) for visual rhetorics and circulation studies. Though the method is designed especially apply to the tracking of visual images, it was easy to relate to the task of following tracking language and genres. Making this connection gave this study a secondary identity as part of the broader, interdisciplinary field of circulation studies which shares a common interest in "not only how discourse is produced and distributed but also how once delivered, discourse circulates, transforms, and affects change through its material encounters" (Gries, 2013, p. 333). Gries' tracking method focuses on how texts circulate, enter into new relations, and transform. It also involves an openness to discovery, which "entails drifting, letting go of one's motives, and letting oneself be drawn by the psychogeographical effects that emerge as one wonders through an urban or cyber landscape" (Gries, 2013, p. 339). Its procedures involve phases of web searching, data mining, following emergent collectives, and examining particular collectives in detail.

I drew on these broad phases in my tracking of artifacts related to networked publics. My first tracking step in this study was web searching. I used the Google search engine to generate a large initial data set. For each case, I searched terms or links that were commonly used to signal that network. My second step was data mining. I clicked through the links generated in my Google searches. I then created a screen capture of each relevant link/website using Evernote (Aiu et al., 2015), a web-based archiving tool that preserved images of each site with their hyperlinks intact. I tagged each screen capture with terms related to my research questions concerning group formations and what stabilizes or endures (e.g., notable people and groups; genres; key moments of growth of shift in circulation; notable distances or geographies reached; and notable rhythms or shifts in timing of conversation). My third tracking step was to follow up on some of the sites identified in data mining, doing another round of tracking with new search terms, screen captures, and tags. My fourth and final step in tracking was to pursue some particularly interesting or important aspects of publics with in-depth analysis. In total, I collected a total of about 1,700 websites and images through screen captures, logging in my memos, and writing about them.

Intercepting. In addition to tracking inlinks (links pointing toward children's sites), I also tracked outlinks (links from the children's sites to elsewhere online). I based this approach on Burrell's (2009) advice to ethnographers for managing the unwieldiness of a multi-sited network: to also strategically locate oneself at a site where movements could be intercepted. In her study of internet cafes in Ghana, Burrell stationed herself at a fixed point (a café); she then followed people and things moving through the café or out from it; and then returned to the café to begin again (and again). Walker (2010) brought Burrell's notion of intercepts to the study of online discussion forums, conceptualizing them as sites where the researcher could intercept civic life, users, and topics moving in and out of discussion.

In this study, I likened Burrell's notion of intercepts to Callon's notion of *obligatory passage points* (Callon, 1986), points in the network through which others must pass in order to accomplish their goals. These are also similar to Latour's (1987) notion of *centres of calculation* (p. 233). I conceptualized the main sites of children's activity as intercepts, from which I could observe the intersections of people and things associated with the networked public. I archived these sites in their entirety (or sampled generously), noting recurring and important connections to outside entities. Based on confirmation of the importance of these leads through interviews, I searched the children's sites for relevant outlinks to these entities to get a sense of their relationships, and then clicked on links to explore who and what the children's sites were pointing to. I selectively screen-captured and memoed these outlinks, and following these associations out only as far as they were relevant to the study. Then, I returned to the children's sites to begin again (and again). Depending on the importance of these outlinks and relationships to my focal participants, I followed up on them by using the procedures described above for tracking in order to gather more extensive data on groups of particular interest.

Bounding under the influence of ANT. Latour (1996b) argues that a study should be bound by the limits indicated by interviewees. The local is something the participants define, not the investigator, and how participants frame things is part of what the research must understand. I appreciated Latour's ideal, but in practice found it quite challenging. To trace involved following actor to actor. Not being able to lean classroom walls, or schools or other institutions to theoretically define the boundaries of study was a constant source of anxiety during the study. To adequately trace, I needed to do far more interviews than I'd estimated at the start of the study, and combing thoroughly through each interview before the next was a necessary step in the tracing. Each interview included hand-written notes, turned immediately into coding memos, and followed by immediate transcripts, which were then used to generate evidence of who I should meet, interview, and observe next. For each interviewee, I generated a personalized interview protocol listing pathways I'd observed could be important to talk about and trace, depending on where the interviewees led me in conversation. This process was very time consuming. Ultimately, it was time that named the place to stop.

Describing. In order to understand and record the details of networked publics, this study adopted methods for writing ethnographic fieldnotes. Getting at the details was particularly important in this study, given its goal of helping educators envision networked publics to such a degree that they could teach about networked publics and delivery.

In order to achieve rich descriptions, my fieldnotes increased in length, comprehensiveness, and orientation toward external audiences over time. Following Emerson et al. (2011), this involved moving from writing *jottings* (bits of language, details, and events); to *sketches* (snapshots that described the details of a website or an important moment); to *episodes* (recounts of actions over time); and finally to *fieldnote tales* (longer, more vivid coherent descriptions of actions in sequence). In selecting which scenes and sequences to describe, I focused my attention on key moments identified through by tracking, mapping, and coding, as described in the next section.

I also kept electronic research notebooks to log the everyday, practical conduct of the inquiry as well as insights before and after interviews. I documented these detailed thoroughly in notebooks dedicated to each stage of research and case. As shown in Table 3.4, my research notebooks totaled 430 pages (single-spaced) in Microsoft Word file. Within the notebooks, observations were entered into a table with columns indicating the date of the entry, name of case, context of observation, and finally the contents detailed memos. These notebooks were stored on my personal laptop in an electronic file with my analytical maps and memos. In addition, I kept web-based notebooks for each case online using a digital archiving tool called Evernote (Aiu et al., 2015); these online notebooks included online data sources (screen captures), data summaries, fieldnotes, and analytic memos.

Phase 3: Analysis

The primary purpose of Phase 3, Analysis, was to generate research findings that relate the study's conceptual framework to the data, and then to prepare those findings for presentation to other researchers and educators. Analysis was an ongoing process, used continually through data collection to keep my attention focused on this study's concerns (and conceptualizations of) distribution, circulation, and (in)stability. More specifically, my analysis was conducted through these ongoing processes: *mapping*, *memoing*, and *coding*.

Mapping. During data collection in each case, I used mapping exercises for analysis, drawn from Clarke's (2005) *situational analysis*. As Clarke has explained, this qualitative research approach was intended to bring grounded theory (e.g., Strauss, 1978) around the postmodern turn in social theory. In part, situational analysis was also inspired by ANT, taking up ANT's interest in attending to both humans and nonhumans in analysis, and avoiding micro/macro ideas of context as being a frame that surrounds a situation. Situational analysis identifies elements within a situation (e.g., humans, nonhumans, discourses, and technologies); and analyzes the relations between those elements, with the understanding that "the conditions of the situation are in the situation" (p. 72).

In total, I made 29 maps (Table 3.4). Following Clarke, my situational maps were designed to identify important elements in a situation (e.g., key events, issues, texts, people, and materials). To create the maps, I used a mapping tool called Scapple (Blount, Petra'ka, & Baumgartner, 2014). An exemplar of the resulting maps is provided in Appendix D. My process involved writing down all the elements that seemed to "make a difference," and texts and other materials that seem to "matter" in the situation (pp. 87-88). The process resulted a map with "almost everything [I could figure out was] important in the research situation written on it" (p. 89). I made maps for the focal children in each case, as well as the other child interviewees. In focal cases, I returned to the maps after successive interviews with members of the networked public, and added, highlighted, moved, etc. to reveal my new understandings of what mattered in the case. The process helped me appreciate the diverse and distant connections in a networked public, while also progressively identifying moments, relationships, groups, etc. that were very connected and potentially important for further analysis.

Occasionally, I paused during tracking to construct another type of map introduced by Clarke (2005): *positional maps*. These focus on groups (rather than individuals), and lay out the different positions taken on issues of concern. These maps were a good fit with the ANT perspective guiding this study, which advocates for following actors by following their controversies (Latour, 2010). I used these maps to sensitize myself to the varying groups within networked publics by naming the diversity in their perspectives. This was an especially useful exercise as a pre-cursor to more in-depth coding and writing about my third research question on (in)stabilities.

Memoing and coding. During data collection, I used analytic memos to direct my attention toward distributions, circulations, and instabilities, and to make decisions about what data within those larger strands to pursue. Following Emerson et al. (2011), I composed memos of varying lengths, including short *asides* reacting to my fieldnotes, longer *commentaries* reflecting on my fieldnotes, and extended *in-process* memos for making connections across fieldnotes. I read through websites, captured screens, quoted and bolded telling artifacts, and more generally wrote about what I was observing. My memos included brief analytic asides that were distinguished from my field note observations as theoretical notes (TN) and methods-related notes (MN) (Corsaro, 1985). To track my process, at the top of each memo I included two sections: a 'What I Did' section (e.g., listing the source of data collected, the date collected, the amount of data, and sampling decisions) and a 'Summary' section (e.g., overview of what the data showed, topics addressed, background, and key points of interest). For focal children's sites, I looked extensively into their online archives (e.g., blogs, websites, Facebook, Twitter). In order to keep track of what I saw, after every 20 or so blog posts (or the equivalent), I added more extended analytic commentary to capture what I'd observed in relation to each of my three research questions, writing under these headings: On Distribution, On Circulation, and On Genres/Power/(In)Stabilities.

After the completion of data collection for each case, I began a more systematic coding process using qualitative research software. First, I reviewed all of my existing memos and maps. Then, I selected a set of documents to begin coding in TAMS (Text Analysis Markup System) (Weinsten, 2014), an open-source software designed for ethnographic research and discourse analysis. I started coding with the focal participant and parent interviews, and then extended to other family member interviews and other key participant interviews (prioritized based on my research questions). Then, I coded my fieldnotes, research log, and most pertinent data exemplars. Along the way, I kept coding memos to document my process.

My codebook included a combination of a priori and emergent codes from within and across cases. The most important of these codes across the cases are displayed in Appendix E1. As I coded, key codes became progressively refined as I generated sub-codes (e.g., genre>bookreview) and sub-sub-codes (e.g., uptake>authors>indie). Across cases, I electronically coded approximately 7,000 bits of data as I reread, generating about 2,000 unique codes and sub-codes (Table 3.4). Appendix E2 shows an exemplar of the application of these codes looked in TAMS.

Coding within each case, I eventually reached saturation: a point when very few new codes were emerging through analysis. At that point, I exported all codes to a spreadsheet, in which I sorted the codes into thematic units organized by research question, a priori and emergent themes within each question, and families of related codes within each of them. Appendix F shows a partial screen-shot of one spreadsheet and how I grouped related codes. This process of coding and sorting codes generated an overview of findings and important recurring themes within the data for each case.

From here, I chose specific pieces of data to explore in a more focused way, as representatives of the larger themes in the case. At a fine grain, I coded these representative exemplars as well as data that directly related to them. These focused analyses became the foundations of my case reports, which I hoped would offer reader's a detailed understanding of particular data as well as a general sense of the broader data set. During this process, I read literature related to my conceptual framework, noting connections between the concepts and the practical conduct I was observing. This back-and-forth reading of theory and data was aided by my auditing a graduate-level class on ANT which met twice weekly for 4.5

months, and concluded in writing up an ANT analysis of data. The readings, class conversation, peer feedback, and professor's feedback in this course were very helpful to my confidence in thinking about, speaking about, and writing about ANT.

Finally, I wrote more extended *integrative memos* that juxtaposed data, observations, and relevant domain literature. These totaled 35-75 single-spaced pages per case. In this process, I was also helped by Scrivener (Blount, Petra'ka, Baumgartner, & Yoshida, 2015), a digital writing project-management tool that allowed me to compose increasingly detailed, integrative memos in a split-screen view; I could memo in a bottom pane of the screen while easily toggling through analytic memos in the top pane, and even opening up data in new windows that I could spread across my laptop and stand-alone monitors as I wrote. Integrative memos were rich, comprehensive descriptions. My pilot study was my first attempt to write up research findings that describe the growth of digital public over time, while also weaving in relevant domain literature in order to generate interest (per Hansen, 2011). In the final cases, I worked to refine lengthy descriptions generated by this technique, and opted to focus on relevance to educators as a point of interest wove through the final cases.

Coding based on constructs. Recalling Chapter 2, this investigation drew on constructs from actor-networks, and theories of public discourse. Constructs from these approaches that were especially important to this study included: *publics*, *translation*, *delegation*, *inscription*, and *deflation*. Taken together, these ideas allowed me to (re)define and study *networked publics* as: relatively stable, ongoing circulations or re-representations of discourse, enacted by heterogeneous actors mobilizing toward a common goal. The following is a review of how I drew on these constructs in analysis:

To study how distribution (net)worked, I thought about *publics* (Barnett, 2008; Warner, 2002); I coded how writers' choices of language, media, and timing that summoned indefinite others, calling for their presence and anticipating their response. I also thought about *translation* (Latour, 1999b), and especially the four moments of translation conceptualized by Callon (1986) (see Chapter 2); I thus coded how writers assembled networks by setting up common problems (problematization), recruiting others (interessement), negotiating roles among those others (enrollment), and finally mobilizing them toward shared goals (mobilization).

To study how circulation (net)worked, I looked for call-and-response patterns that were repeated over time. I coded who emerged as spokespersons for the networked publics, taking them up and transforming them. To study how (de|re)stabilization worked, I thought about *delegation* (Latour, 1996a); I coded non-humans (technologies and texts) that folded in relations and extended them over distance and times. I paid particular attention to texts as *inscriptions* that hold networks together; I coded the genres that circulated through and stabilized activity, following Spinuzzi (2008). Noting how writers often cyclically condensed dispersed texts and other actors into compact genres, I conducted a secondary analysis using the construct of *deflation* (Latour, 1986b); I coded to notice how genres became more compact as they concatenated over time.

Finally, to study destabilization, I noted moments when controversies threatened connections, and I coded how those connections were held steady or repaired by the savvy performances of these network builders: kids, parents, texts, and technologies.

Phase 4: Evaluation

The primary purpose of Phase 4, Evaluation, was to ensure the research produced would be a high-quality representation of the phenomenon under study. To this end, ongoing assessment was used, and included: self-evaluation in a research log, feedback from two peer debriefers (who reviewed transcripts and/or cases throughout the research process), and written evaluation of case drafts by professors. This feedback was used to continue to keep the study on track with criteria for quality in a performative case study, as defined by Hansen (2011). These were: *realism*, *conceptual clarity*, *consistency*, and *interest*. Here are Hansen's definitions of the each criterion and how I addressed them:

The criterion of *realism* refers to trustworthiness. It "implies that the things in the performative study are likely to happen… Could [they] have happened? If not, the description appears unrealistic and the study's legitimacy will fade away" (p. 128). This was achieved through providing detailed descriptions that drew on specific evidence through quoted or cited data artifacts. Realism was also supported by clearly reporting the type and amount of data captured, and the process for doing so.

The criterion of c*onceptual clarity* refers to how clearly a study presents theoretical concepts and makes them comprehensible to readers. This was addressed by offering definitions of constructs, and well as more detailed explanations of less familiar constructs (e.g., from ANT). I also embedded more description of those constructs in the early cases.

The criterion of *consistency* refers the presence of "fixed points or common features" in the case study, "since demonstrating fluidity and dynamics requires some degree of regularity and stability" (p. 127). This was addressed by keeping consistent in my points of inquiry, concepts, methods of data collection, analysis, and reporting across the cases; this way, cases could be compared and appear as a cohesive collection of cases exploring variations of the same phenomenon.

For Hansen, consistency also refers to maintaining a performative stance. Inside the cases of this dissertation (Chapters 4-6), I shift into a performative, less formal style to narrate the findings. The narration is reminiscent of other ANT research, that I have appreciated for its giving readers the sense of experiencing the phenomenon in practice as much as possible, as if the researcher were giving a one-on-one guided tour (e.g., Latour 1996b; Latour, 2005; Spinuzzi, 2008). This was important to my purposes in this study, which included allowing researchers and educators to gain purview and attachment to a lesser-known, abstract phenomenon that could sound off-putting and risky (e.g., "children in public," children and "strangers"). I hoped that through narration I might bring readers into the performance, allowing them to experience as best I could the 'doing' of networked publics; by treating the unknown reader of this research as a familiar, I endeavored to "see whether the *event* of the social can be extended all the way to the *event* of them reading trough the medium of the text" (Latour, 2005, p. 133) (see Methodology section).

Nonetheless, I consciously broke with Hansen's criteria for consistency by stepping outside of the performance of the details of the cases to relate the findings to what we do in literacy research and teaching. This was necessary given the framing of this project as a doctoral dissertation, and the intention of the study to inspire further inquiry among literacy research and teachers. I purposefully paused often in the cases to suggest how these outside-of-school, vernacular practices relate to what we do in schools. In doing so, what I may have lost in consistency as a criterion, I hope to have gained in interest, the final criterion.

In performative case study, the criterion of *interest* means to generate tension for readers between the cases they are reading and what they already know. I endeavored to accomplish this through thorough discussion of domain literature related to these findings. Within the cases, I focused my commentary on pedagogy, to show how the results of this study built upon and/or challenged current or traditional practice in the teaching of writing. In the final chapter, I focused my commentary on research, to show how this study's findings reflect, challenge, or extend our knowledge base in literacy studies. Though I hoped to promote interest in these ways, *interest* is a criterion I will continue to assess after the publication of this dissertation to see if it indeed generated further interest and inquiry among literacy researchers and teachers in children's publics, networked writing, or uses of ANT for translocal literacy studies.

In the next chapters, I introduce what this study revealed about distribution, circulation, and (de)stabilization in these three cases, respectively: This Kid Reviews Books (Chapter 4), Matt's Bats (Chapter 5), and reKindle (Chapter 6).

PART II: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Chapter 4: This Kid Reviews Books

Nine-year-old Erik loved books. One day, he got an idea: If he told other kids and parents about the books he liked, perhaps he could help them find books they'd like too. Perhaps he could write a newspaper column, Erik suggested to his parents. But his dad made two good points: 1) A newspaper maybe wouldn't hire a kid; and 2) If he started a blog instead, anyone around the world could read it (Erik, Interview, 7-23-14).

Erik has retold this story lots of times in interviews—mine is just the latest in a much wider world of curious readers and writers who've clamored to interview the kid behind this internationally popular blog, This Kid Reviews Books (TKRB). Four years since its start in 2011, "This Kid" and his blog have enrolled 4,000 subscribers. TKRB also has thousands of followers on social media like Facebook, Twitter, and GoodReads, and now a budding YouTube series called *The Write Chat*, in which Erik and his friend Felicia interview lots of authors who are very famous, boldly and quite remarkably, right alongside interviews of lots of authors who are very unfamous. Erik inevitably laughs when he tells people this last part of his biography: he did eventually get to do what he'd set out to: write a newspaper column (Interview, 7-23-14). This invited monthly column is a source of great pride for Erik, as well as a much-coveted press pass.

The following case study explores how and why a whole wide world of readers, authors, and publishers became so very, very interested in what a boy who was "~~9~~ ~~10~~ ~~11~~ ~~12~~ 13" years old wrote about their books (This Kid Reviews Books, n.d.-a). Periodically, we'll pause to consider on behalf of literacy education: What might this have to do with writing in schools? The sections that follow present, in order, findings related to this study's three strands of inquiry: *distribution*, *circulation,* and (*de|re)stabilization*.

On Distribution

Even at a quick glance, it would be unmistakable to readers what Erik's blog was about. In giant, black, block lettering stamped across the top center of the screen it read: "**THIS KID REVIEWS BOOKS.**" Beneath the title at the right, a drawing of a studious-looking young man is featured (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. TKRB's logo.

He's clad in black and leaning into a large open book, while looking quizzically off screen at whomever might be watching. With raised eyebrows and one finger raised, he's clearly got a point to make. Clicking on the smaller, but equally bold, sub-heading to his left reveals what "This Kid" Erik is up to:

> **ABOUT "THIS KID" — ERIK!**
>
> Hi, my name is Erik. I love books, so that's why I have this blog. The reason I'm doing this is for parents to approve of a book, and for kids to find an excellent book too! Speaking of kids, did you know that I am one too? I am ~~9~~ ~~10~~ ~~11~~ ~~12~~ 13 years old. I got the idea for this blog when my grandmom told me she was shopping for a book for me and didn't know what to buy and a kid in the store told her to get me "The Strange Case of Origami Yoda". He said it was a good book and that I would like it, so she bought it. Well, it is a good book and I did like it. I thought that if my grandmom would take the advice of a kid maybe "this kid" (me) could help other kids and grown-ups looking for books for kids, find books they like. Plus my Mom is always trying to find "appropriate" books for me so I

am going to include some of her and my Dad's thoughts on some of the books I read.

READ THIS PARAGRAPH!!!!

If you do not see the book you are looking for do not worry. Tell me about it and I'll give you my opinion. If you have any questions, ask me and I'll try to answer it. **OR** if you know of a great book I might like, let me know, I am always looking for good material!! Thank you!

Your new friend, Erik :)

Note: Because of Erik's age, This Kid Reviews Books is monitored and maintained by his parents. All social media sites are registered to his parents. However, all content on and design of this site and social media sites is by Erik unless otherwise noted. (This Kid Reviews Books, n.d.-a)

Beneath, screen after screen unfold, 264 comments of conversation between Erik and his readers over the past four years. This is just one introductory blog post (among over a thousand on TKRB), but it's a good representation of the typical way Erik approached the delivery of writing: as an act of service to others.

Below, we'll take closer look at how writing as an act of service worked for TKRB. First, looking through the lens of publics, I'll show how Erik anticipated the interests of others, and then set out to serve them through the performance of punctual writing and response. Second, looking through the lens of actor-network theory (ANT), I'll show how TKRB's relationships were sustained over time and distance through one particularly spreadable genre: the book review. Interestingly, I found that as Erik offered TKRB's book reviews in service to others, in turn these others were enrolled in service to TKRB.

Publicness and the Art of Summoning a Readership

It was easy to find the parallels between how TKRB performed digital delivery and how Warner (2002) theorized the work of public world-building.

Next, I feature these parallels to show TKRB's performances of digital distribution were acts of public world-building. I focus on three approaches Erik used most commonly and effectively, and how they summoned others to perform TKRB and to keep performing it. These three approaches were: projecting his readership and their needs; keeping in time with them through routine interaction; and seeking to confirm his readership and their needs.

Projecting a readership and their needs. For Warner (2002), publics come from "poetic world-making" (p. 82). Public discourse says: "Let a public exist," and "Let it have this character, speak this way, see the world this way" (p. 82). Revisiting "About 'This Kid'—Erik!" as an illustrative example, we can see how TKRB's origins were in Erik's projection or social imagination of other people and their needs. Note in that example how Erik writes about the problem his grandmom had (not knowing what book to buy a kid) and the problem his mom had ("always trying to find 'appropriate' books"). In response, he developed a social imagination of an audience: adults and kids like his grandmom and mom and himself who needed to know which books were appropriate for kids and which ones they would like; as Erik wrote, it was "for parents to approve of a book, and for kids to find an excellent book too!" He imagined readers that would want a kid's perspective on books ("I'll give you my opinion"), would have questions about books he could answer ("Ask me and I'll try to answer it"), and would perhaps even be readers who wanted to recommend books too ("If you know of a great book I might like"), and enjoy relating to him the way that he enjoyed relating to them ("Your new friend, Erik").

So this is how Erik projected a public: he postulated readers' needs, imagined readers' calling those needs out to him, and imagined himself serving their needs by writing about books. [Later, we'll see how on-point Erik was with these projections. Indeed, there was (and is) a ready audience for a kid's perspectives on books and a kid's book reviews.] Imagining this ready audience, Erik seemed to be doing just the kind of thing Warner (2002) suggests one must do to build a public: "specify in advance, in countless highly condensed ways, the lifeworld of [a public's] circulation" (p. 82). Erik specified a circulation that would respond to these projected readers and needs specifying routines and procedures, including their timing. These are addressed next.

Keeping in time. Warner (2002) suggests public discourse comes into being is through their distinctive temporal performances. The discourse is not merely ongoing, it is punctual, and characterized by regular, even daily or weekly, intervals of publication (Warner, 2002). Erik set up exchanges of writing with predictable rhythm necessary to maintain public discourse. To see how, we can take a closer look at another tab posted at the top of Erik's blog: his weekly schedule.

> **BLOG SCHEDULE**
>
> Monday – Book Review or Event
>
> Wednesday – Book Review or Event
>
> Thursday – Creative Kids, famous quote or kid guest book review (if someone sends something in)
>
> Friday – Perfect Picture Book Friday with Susanna Leonard Hill
>
> If I go to a special event I may post about it on an additional day, but I am going to try to stick to this schedule. :)
>
> I will still check my blog and email daily (or as much as I can).
>
> THANK YOU FOR READING MY BLOG!!!
>
> (This Kid Reviews Books, n.d.-b).

The plan, then, was to routinely respond every week, many times a week, in all of these genres.

Quite remarkably, Erik lived up to that plan. Sampling Erik's posts stretching from 2011-2014 revealed how he did that. As shown in Table 4.1, he posted on average 19 times each month. He posted several times each week in a steady rhythm. And he was steadfast in his genres: book reviews and guests' reviews (70%), celebrations of author events and book releases (10%), as well as other features and interviews with authors and Creative Kids (10%). Note, too, that these genres were again about responses to others. The intention (and the practice that followed) was to keep on and keep up with others using a purposeful, committed schedule.

Table 4.1

Genres of Blog Posts by TKRB (Cross-Section of April-May from 2011-2014)

	Books Reviews	Author & Book Events	Author & Kid Features	Other Rdg & Wtg	Total Posts
2011-April	6	4	2	4	**16**
2011-May	12	3	1	0	**16**
2012-April	14	3	3	5	**25**
2012-May	13	1	2	3	**19**
2013-April	14	0	1	0	**15**
2013-May	13	3	3	0	**19**
2014-April	18	1	4	1	**24**
2014-May	18	1	0	1	**20**
Total	108	16	16	14	**154**
Total % *	**70%**	**10.5%**	**10.5%**	**9%**	**Avg = 19**

* Rounded to nearest half percent

Another way Erik would keep time, not displayed here, was by responding to comments on his blog every day, or nearly everyday. For anyone, not a just a kid, this might be a demanding schedule. And it required help to manage, especially from his mother, who acted as a sort of secretary for him by helping him to sort through his emails, distribute form letters responding to authors' requests, arrange his calendar of reviews, and manage his time (including limiting the number of books he'd agree to review) (Erik, Interview, 7-23-14; Ginny, Interview, 7-25-14). Nonetheless, he replied frequently. And he also replied almost ubiquitously. Even as his readership grew, he kept up a staggering volume of ongoing dialogue in the comments of his blog posts—even as they grew into the hundreds of comments within a month—and rarely breaking, except on planned family vacations. In this commitment to timely and regular response, Erik created a steady rhythm that allowed others to call-and-respond in time with him, as publics want to do (Barnett, 2009; Warner, 2002).

Confirming correspondence. Erik's plan would have to be realized in some way to make TKRB a networked public—wild intention alone doesn't make a public: "A text, to have a public, must continue to circulate through time" (Warner, 2002, p. 68). Publics want to be performed, not just imagined. As Warner describes it, "Public discourse says not only "let a public exist," then it "goes out in search of confirmation that such a public exists, with greater or lesser success—success being further attempts to cite, circulate, and realize the world-understanding it articulates. Run it up the flagpole, and see who salutes. Put on a show, and see who shows up." (p. 82) As described in the section above, one such confirmation method Erik used was to respond to people's comments routinely; in this way, he made "further attempts to cite, circulate and realize" the public he'd imagined.

Another way Erik confirmed his readership was by seeking them out—locating the readers and writers he'd imagined through blogs and social media. Erik did that, within his first year of blogging—casting a wide net to other people's blogs about reading and writing, and responding to their posts with his always appreciative tenor. He also joined their online communities as a participant, joining them and posting on his blog about what he'd been doing. This routinely included things like:

- Perfect Picture Book Friday, where bloggers post synopses and teaching links to their favorite books for everyone in the group to comment on

Fridays

- Reading “challenges”
- Writing contests and challenges like “Picture Book Idea Month” or the “12x12” challenge to write 12 picture books in 12 months
- Writing groups and weekly feedback forums for children’s authors online
- Feedback forums for writers
- Special national and international events for readers, like International Dot Day and International Read Aloud Day

Erik followed up on these relationships, making routine correspondence a norm with these other writers and readers. As another book blogger noted, the growth of TKRB was related to Erik’s combination of spreading out widely around the internet, while at the same time genuinely investing in those relationships:

> One thing that Erik does that helps his website to grow is to comment and visit other blogs. He leaves genuine comments that build a relationship with other bloggers. Erik doesn’t only hang out at his own blog space but you can find him all over the blogosphere… That is key. Starting a blog and building relationships with other bloggers are two different animals. Erik is a natural with building those relationships. (Cool Mom, 2014)

Through repeated comments to particular sites over time, Erik was building relationships. Comments, too, were part of his weekly schedule His routine alternated between prioritizing his own blog some days, and prioritizing reading and responding to his blogging buddies’ sites on other days (Erik, Interview, 7-23-14). He’d be notified by email of every time one of the sites he subscribed to had a new post, and part of his routine was to work through those emails, following the links back to each blog to read and to respond systematically. On several other people’s blogs I read, I noted that Erik responded to every post with some bit of encouragement or praise, and quite often was the very first person to respond. This habit of responding elsewhere online seemed to be almost as important, if not equally important, a part of distribution than anything Erik was doing to shape the texts on his own blog.

By doing these things, Erik was doing the work of the public-builder: "confirming" the existence of an imagined audience—replies being "further attempts to cite, circulate, and realize the world-understanding" (p. 82). By faithfully giving others these little confirmations (replies), Erik opened up a pathway for a relationship for others to do the same. As we'll see below (On Circulation), Erik's timing became their timing, and just as he did for them, they'd do for him: replying post-after-post, month-after-month, year-after year.

Summary. All in all, Erik's was a humble approach to distribution: to foreground other writers, readers, books—to focus on their interests and their needs. To put it in terms of publics, if we think of public discourse as a kind of "call-and-response" relationship (Barnett, 2009, p. 22; Warner, 2002), Erik's approach was to lead with the "response" part. Not 'Look at me' first; after all, he was just "This Kid" who was a curious observer of whatever it was he'd been given to study, as his logo image would suggest (see Figure 4.1). The message was not "Hey, Reader! Look at me!;" it was more as if to say, "Hey, Reader, let's look at this book, or this author. Oh, here! Let's look at these other creative kids, too!" Indeed, scanning down the right side of Erik's blog underscores this point: In the marginalia, Erik's own projects and social media pages are just scattered about, from top to bottom, amidst logos and links to other books, kids, blogs, etc.

Perhaps this kid of humility is something we shouldn't be surprised to find associated with public discourse. Drawing on Dewey's (1927) idea of a public, we can think of them as involving this kind of social imagination or empathy with the needs of people we don't know yet. But is it really something we'd expect of a kid with over 4,000 subscribers to his blog—that he wouldn't focus on pushing his own content over the content of others? Compared to the hundreds of other networked kids' websites I encountered during the course of this study, Erik's humility was a stand-out. No resume of his achievements. No photo gallery showcasing authors he'd met and interviewed. No link to the interviews people had done of him. If I was surprised, his mom wasn't: "That's just not him," she explained to me in our interview. "He's not in it for the greater glory of Erik" (Ginny, Interview, 7-25-14). "We're not very pretentious people," she went on, her voice calm, her hair still wet from the shower. "And I try to relate that to my kids. That it's more about other people than ourselves" (Ginny, Interview, 7-25-14). Indeed, when I interviewed Erik, his mom (a PhD in chemistry) was off camera chiming in while folding laundry and cleaning the bathroom. Indeed, her son told a similarly humble story about, as did his website and its delivery. As we've seen, TKRB made itself "more about other people" right from the start, beginning with social imagination and empathy, and leading to reading and writing as acts of service to each author, each book, each reader, performed faithfully every day and week and month and year. This is the committed practice of distribution that made TKRB into a networked public.

Putting Translation on Display and on Demand: Book Reviews

If we look next through the lens of ANT, we can see that TKRB's world-building moves also paralleled the processes of translation (as described by Callon, 1986). By projecting a public and defining their needs and goals, TKRB engaged in *problematization;* by seeking out and confirming that public, TKRB engaged in *interessement*; and by defining the temporal routines and types of posts his readers could expect (along with routine replies), TKRB engaged in *enrollment*.

However, the addition of ANT to this analysis invites further looking at how texts held these processes together. To study network building, ANT invites us to look for series of re-representations (or "recurring set of translations") and genres (following Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 88), and ANT invites us to look at how these things bring together and mobilize diverse entities diverse toward a common goal (following Callon, 1986). In the case of TKRB, the recurring genre of interest was the book review. In my analysis, I explored how Erik's book reviews displayed and invited acts of translation. They did so by making a 'thing' out of Erik's reading experiences. That is, they fixed Erik's personal experience of reading into a shareable digital text. Further, they set up a clear procedure others could use to request a review. For authors and readers, it was essentially an offer of service: Erik would perform these acts of translation, if you just took up his system for making requests. Let's use an ANT lens to see how and why Erik's system worked.

A system of translation: Requests and ratings. Through an ANT lens, we can read another excerpt from TKRB's main blog headings and notice how Erik sets up predictable processes for translation: Erik will transform his reading experiences into things (book reviews), while his readers will transform their books into book review requests. Here is how Erik explains the system at the heading of his blog:

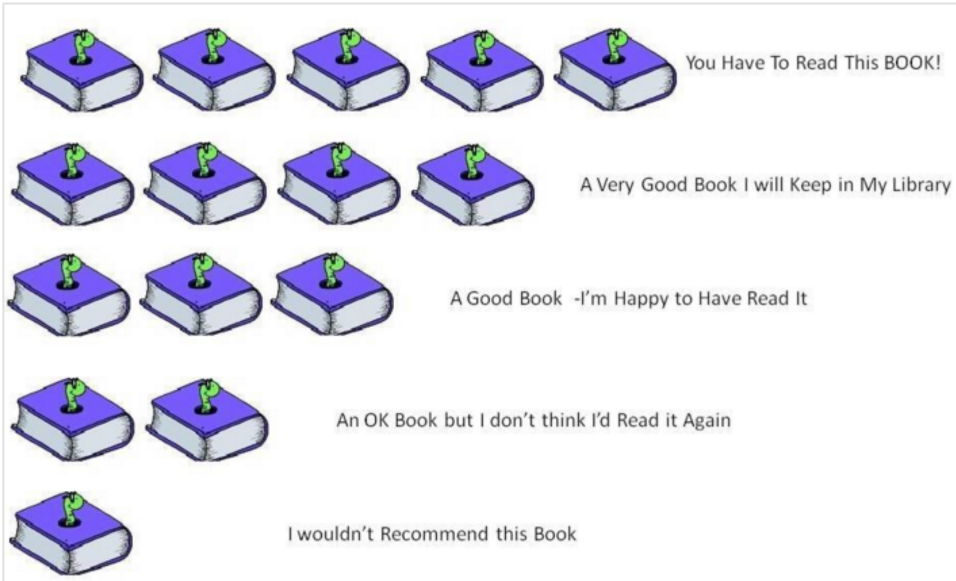
> **BOOK REVIEW REQUESTS**
>
> I review picture and middle grade books. I do review some YA books, but I have to let my parents look at the content of them first before accepting a book. Books sent to me should only have minor bad language, no graphic violence or anything else a twelve-year-old shouldn't be reading. It takes about 8-9 weeks from the time I get a book to review to when the review is posted (may go quicker in the summer when I don't have school)….I cannot accept every book I am sent because of a full "to be reviewed" list. I do reply to every email I get so if you don't get a response, I didn't get your email.
>
> I post reviews on my blog, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Smashwords,

Biblionasium and GoodReads. I rate books on Amazon, Barnes and Noble and GoodReads using their star system and I use my bookworm rating for my blog… **Please do not send Amazon gift cards in a money value to purchase the book for review. Send the actual book, file or gift a book from Amazon. Amazon considers a gift card (even if it is used to buy the book for review) as payment for a review and won't let me post a review for a book like that. Plus, I never accept any money for the reviews I do. I appreciate every book review request I get and I really wish I could read every one, but I am only one kid! I do often refer books I can't review to other kid book reviewers. (This Kid Reviews Books, n.d.-c).

A NOTE ABOUT MY RATING SYSTEM

I am not a professional reviewer – I am a kid who loves to read. I review books because I like it. I never get gifts or paid for what I do. I do read books I do not care for but the vast majority of them do not make it on my blog. Because I want my blog to be about spreading the word about good books, if I read a book I don't care for, I still write a review but email it to the author and give them the opportunity to have it published or not.
Most authors ask me not to publish it but thank me for telling them my issues with the book. Trashing a book on my blog that someone worked really hard on is not something I want to do. (This Kid Reviews Books. (n.d.-d).

Figure 4.2. TKRB's bookworm rating system. (This Kid Reviews Books. (n.d.-d)



Let's unpack these excerpts further to see how they were displaying and offering moments of translation. The book review scale (Figure 4.2) and its conducts suggest what ANT would call interessement (see Callon, 1986). TKRB invites readers to participate by making a request, and to achieve their own goals (getting book reviews) by going through Erik. This book review system is also a move toward *enrollment*; TKRB defines roles for his parents, himself, and those who would make a request of him. He outlined clear expectations in a number of areas: rules about what content to send (not things a twelve-year-old shouldn't be reading), an anticipated timeline for turning around review requests (8-9 weeks unless it's summertime), the norms for accepting or rejecting requests and corresponding by email (he responds to every email), a defined set of social media sites to which he'll disperse his reviews (including Amazon and GoodReads), and rules for what to send (the actual book) and what not to send (gift cards or payment). TKRB defines its own role and rules of engagement clearly: it's "spreading the word about good books," and not "trashing" other people's hard work; and unfavorable reviews would be published by Erik only with the consent of the book's author.

Finally, in a clear visual delineation of expectations, TKRB offers the 5-bookworm rating system, and its associated graphic, showing a scale of evaluation ranging from "wouldn't recommend" to a "you have to read this BOOK!" Notice that the emphasis at the end of the bookworm continuum is placed on the reader's perspective: this is about "YOU," and what Erik would or wouldn't recommend. And so to your benefit, the offer TKRB is making is to translate books into reading experiences, and reading experiences into book reviews, and then collapse (deflate) book reviews into tiny symbols that are bookworms. This would follow with *mobilization*, sharing these translations on major websites in ways that could aggregate the views of many readers into one space and inform readers' choices and purchases of books. Later, we'll take a closer look at the feature of the book reviews that proved to be so attractive to other people and other websites ("On Circulation," below), and see how important these tiny green bookworms were. But for now, to sum up, we've seen that these tabs and the process of book reviews put translation on display, as a set of procedures and an offer of service upon request. This system for re-representation created a pathway that would allow for TKRB to have ongoing activity, call-and-response and translation—the kinds of things that make a powerful networked public.

Book reviews as immutable mobiles. Texts are often implicated in successful translations or mobilizations (see Callon, 1986). As Latour (1986b) suggested, texts by virtue of their mobility, stability, and combinability can serve as the *immutable mobiles* that sustain relations over time and distance. In this section, we'll see how Erik's reviews did that.

Appendix G shows a representative exemplar of Erik's book reviews. As shown there, TKRB's book reviews were typically published in single blog posts. As such, reviews were 'packaged' in units that would allow ease of travel: compact, standard, easy to locate on the screen without scrolling too much, easy for search engines to find, and easy for others to link to online. Increasing mobility and combinability, the writing in the review was brief—typically 2-3 paragraphs of content—and arranged in this increasingly regular format:

- A short introduction to the book by Erik that cues the genre, character, plot, or other books related to it; or (in later years) a cut-and-paste synopsis of the book from the publisher;
- An evaluation of the book, foregrounding its strengths and on occasion gently mentioning of an area for improvement; and
- A rating of the book on the 5-Bookworm scale.

This template—standard, compact, and predictable in content—made reviews something that Erik could produce in mass volume. It also made reviews something authors could spread easily by pulling brief reviews, quotes, links for their own websites, etc., as I observed was common practice among indie authors self-promoting their books.

Though compact units, TKRB's book reviews typically *folded in* (Latour, 1999b) lots of people and things into one post. Often, they incorporated promotional materials for books, such as videos (book trailers), hyperlinks (to authors' and books' websites), images (book covers), photos (of authors), and the like. Book review pages on TKRB also incorporated screen after screen of comments from readers, and many of these readers were regular responders to TKRB. It was also commonplace for responders to include authors thanking Erik for reviewing their books. By folding all of these together (books, promotional materials, comments, responders, authors), TKRB's reviews were useful for holding together relations through stable displays and predictable patterns of response.

One of the most important features for making TKRB's book *reviews mobile, stable, and combinable* (Latour, 1986b) were the little green bookworms. They were cute, to be sure; they signaled "kid" stuff, which was part of the draw of TKRB (as is explained in "On Circulation," later in this chapter). But bookworms allowed This Kid's message to travel. As a 5-point scale, the bookworms were compatible with the rating systems of leading websites where readers review and purchase books—as noted above in Erik's introduction to the book reviews, he posted his ratings on major media sites like Amazon, GoodReads, and Barnes and Noble. These were simplified versions of the review, and excluded the links and videos and images — just text and the rating. Major retailers would deflate the reviews—collecting all of them and synthesizing them into one average rating for a book. Additionally, they would deflate Erik's participation into statistics attached to his profile. For example, Erik's profile on GoodReads records that he has done 608 reviews, 638 ratings, and rated books on average as 4.75 out of 5 stars. These aggregated statistics—for Erik as a reviewer and for the books he reviewed—were again translations; they transformed Erik's reviews into something small, easily combinable, countable, and reportable to multiple audiences.

Thus, a key distribution approach for TKRB was to make ratings combinable with larger sites. By attracting those sites, TKRB could effectively harness their distribution power to make TKRB's reviews much more visible and spreadable. Finally, before we leave thinking about what book reviews have to do with translation, there is one more important point to be made about distribution. Translation doesn't just mean to *take up*, it also means to *transform*—and it was Erik's subtle transformation of the book review that was perhaps its most attractive feature of all.

A transformation of the genre: From review to recommendation. In a translation model, it is understood that bringing people and things together into one place means to leading them a bit off their existing course (Latour, 1999a). You want *that*, so I'll give you *this*. Or, I'll give you *that*, but it comes with *this*. A closer look at how Erik was performing book reviews reveals a subtle, but important, shift in what is commonly meant by reviews. In current practice, as on major websites like Amazon.com that offer reviews, or in literary circles where books are reviewed, the term is suggestive of evaluation. In a participatory, digital culture, we increasingly rely on customer "reviews" for all kind of things online—which books to buy, which socks, which dryer—or which plumber to call, or which apartment (not) to rent. Aggregated across customers, we expect reviews (often with ratings attached, like stars) to present us with a critical gaze toward a product or service—the good and the bad—to help us guide our attention and purchases. And this appearance of critical, authentic feedback is important to retailers. As shown above, Erik speaks to how Amazon.com guards against gift cards being given to reviewers, and he makes it clear that he doesn't accept money for reviews. It was also common practice for him to disclose in writing when a book was provided for him free of charge to review as well (as is common practice in his reading blogosphere, and on retail websites like Amazon.com).

But TKRB's rating scale translated reviews into recommendations. Revising its rating system (excerpted above), it was based on assessing what Erik would or wouldn't recommend to readers. However, as we've seen by examining his practice, Erik didn't publish reviews of books he didn't care for; rather, he gave authors the option of his withholding bad reviews, and he wanted to spread good books, not trash bad ones (This Kid Reviews Books, n.d.-d). So in practice, THIS KID *REVIEWS* BOOKS was more like THIS KID *RECOMMENDS* BOOKS. This is translation: a subtle substitution of the critical 'review' with the endorsing 'recommendation.' There is some contradiction between the two, and that didn't go unnoticed by Erik—as above, and often, he noted that he would not accept payment for reviews, and he made a practice of disclosing when books were provided to him in exchange for a review. Integrity was very important to his practice (Erik, Interview, 7-23-14. But so was relationship-building. This is what Erik named as the most important thing about his blog: making connections with people (Erik, Interview, 7-23-14).

This emphasis on positive feedback and relationship-building was evident across the other genres that TKRB published in as well; *promotions*, *interviews*, and *features of other authors and books and events* (see Table 4.1, above)—all of which were ubiquitously positive (similarly to the "Mattitude" in case 2). I thought of them as *genres of recommendation,* given that they were endorsing books and authors. Like the formal *letters of recommendation* people write to explain a person's unique qualifications, these blog posts were texts that fixed relations into something shareable and in the interest of a common purpose. Erik's reviews consistently appreciated books' and authors' strengths, and books were nearly always ranked at the top of Erik's rating scale (4 or 5 bookworms out of 5 bookworms).

But the book review could also be understood as a recommendation in another sense of the word. To give a recommendation can also mean to advise or counsel others toward a course of action, as would someone in the know about a broad range of available options would be trusted to choose faithfully in the best interest of another person ("Recommend", 2015-a; 2015-b). This sense of recommendation is evident in the rating system (the message, again, being to evaluate), as well as in the introduction to Erik's blog. Recall from the excerpt above that the premise of TKRB is that Erik's grandmom and other adults would legitimately "take the advice of a kid" in order to find books that they would like (This Kid Reviews Books, n.d.-a). Here, this kid was positioned as an informed counselor, with the knowledge and experience to match kids to "excellent" texts and help parents "approve" a book that was "appropriate" for their kids. In this role, Erik would be relied upon for his authentic opinions and to think in the terms of his readers' interests.

There was some ambiguity, then, in what it meant that this kid "reviews" books. The offer of translation suggested both a fair appraisal, and Erik was careful about maintaining ethical standards to protect the integrity of his review. At the same time, TKRB published consistently positive reviews and other genres, which together were essentially endorsements. This ambiguity around the book reviews seemed to work in TKRB's favor—as it opened the door for people and websites interested in evaluative-type reviews as well as others interested in more relational endorsements and personal feedback. This is to say that despite their differences, TKRB seemed to make them both work. To understand how, we might return to what they share in common: linguistically, it's the common Latin root: *commendar*, meaning "to commit to the care of" ("Recommend", 2015-b, para. 3). In the end, no matter which kind of 'recommendation' TKRB's book reviews were leaning toward, they relied on relations of trust. To publish a book review was to commit to the care of books and authors, to lift up what there was to like about them; to commit to the care of parents and kids looking for books; and to commit to the care of his blog and other websites where books were talked about and sold. TKRB's book reviews managed to build trust with those different groups—and often all at the same time.

What Might this Have to do With Writing in Schools?

Erik was doing just the kind of thing that writers today need to do—even adult ones with publishing houses. That is, he was entering the field of writing as a reader and responder. As a senior publicist (one of Erik's contacts) explained to me, a book's success depends on engagement online and in the community, and so her advice to writers who want their books to be as successful is to start by following other writers and readers, responding to them, and giving back:

> Sign up for accounts. Start following… and just watch watch watch watch! Don't even start posting yet. Because… nobody wants to subscribe to a Facebook or Instagram or Twitter that is just a commercial on your book. That's not interesting to anybody. It's all about giving. It's all about sharing [and] being interesting. If you're a middle-grade writer, write about five middle-grade books that you saw this week that blew your mind… And that will establish you as interesting and credible to your community. (Lara Starr, Interview, 9-12-14)

For her, publishing didn't mean pushing a button and uploading something, or handing over a manuscript. Publishing was complex, relational work. And the important way to begin is to reach out to others, to read, and respond, so that you can build "an understanding of what the world is you're publishing into." In many ways, these findings affirm what we already know and do as teachers of Language Arts in a workshop model: we help to develop writers by immersing them in lots of reading. We open up spaces for them to share their responses to books. We encourage them to know about a range of authors. We teach them how to appreciate the fine craftsmanship of other writers. TKRB is one indication that our existing practices for teaching Language Arts continue to reflect the kinds of things the writers in the real world need to know how to do.

But there are also some differences to notice here from our current workshop-based approaches to teaching writing—differences that extend the way our communication landscape is changing, and that might inform changes in our classroom landscapes. As this publicist suggests, it is important for writers to establish their credibility. In a new media landscape, this must be valuable. As Rainie and Wellman (2012) point out, our audiences in a network society won't be given to us, the way they might have been in tight-knit villages of days past. We may never meet them face-to-face. In a network society, our audiences will be (and are) more loose, distributed, heterogeneous, and fluid. As Spinuzzi (2008) points out, the task of writing is now “net work,” coordinating action, and holding loose affiliations together, with colleagues who might be just about anyone, just about anywhere; as such, a writer’s work is to continually affirm relationships, negotiate, and build trust (p. 204).

While our current practices in workshop-based classrooms might support us in having the conversations as readers and writers, our structures reflect a landscape in which the audience may be taken for granted: it’s often still the people in our classroom—the people we already know and trust—the people we see in person every day because that is structured for us. How might we go beyond the taken for granted audience and give students opportunities to do the kind of (net)work that the world will ask of them? How can they find their own audiences? How can they build trust and coordinate with people not in the room? How can they negotiate differences with people who might be different or distant from them? Taking a cue from Erik, the following suggestions are offered as a starting place for literacy educators reshaping the classroom landscape to meet the new needs of writers today.

1. Write as an act of service. Erik’s success in locating a real audience grew out of his desire to respond to the needs of other people, and his subsequent building of responsive relationships with those people. In our classrooms, we might invite children to exercise a similar social imagination and humility, seeing writing as an act of service in the world. In Erik’s case, he builds on a personal experience (his grandmother not knowing what books to buy him); he extends that imagination to other kids and adults who might have the same problem; and then he sets out to respond to those needs by offering his perspective as a reader and his daily practice as a writer.

In our classrooms, we might introduce units of study with similar acts of democratic social imagination: Before we decide what to write and how, we might consider: What do we have to offer? What do people need? How can our writing serve those needs? Then, we might get online and seek out the groups we've imagined, to confirm or refine our understandings and our plans for response. This approach offers the opportunity for learners to practice imagining and identifying authentic audiences and would make the assessment of writing into a public-minded practice. For example, are more people's needs met because of what we've done or written? How have we developed greater empathy and understanding of the needs of others? Writing that is just for school or just for our teacher may pale in comparison to matching writing to the needs of audiences outside of school doing work in the world. But our practice needs to go beyond giving writers 'authentic' audiences; indeed, giving an audience could be inauthentic to the demands of writing in a network society, as they are described above. To be more authentic, we can support learners in findings real audiences themselves.

2. Get in a rhythm. Like Erik, we might involve writers in consistent response as a way to build trust with readers. It would not have been possible for Erik to develop the kind of back-and-forth, call-and-response, faithful networked public that he did if he were to have blogged only once in a while, or responded to others occasionally or randomly. If we hope to give learners opportunities to build credibility in online communities of readers and writers and interest groups, we could purposefully establish a rhythm for our daily and weekly writing and responding. Also, we might engage people, websites, or blogs that we want to be in relationship with—demonstrating that we'll show up often, respond thoughtfully, and in a timely manner.

We also might establish a predictable pattern for what we put out. Erik offered readers a predictable format and process, which was something they could come to rely on, or participate in, without having to guess about when and how he'd do it. On our class websites or blogs, we might identify routine schedules or processes or types of posts, and make those transparent to readers so that they can be invited to participate with us. For example, we'll see that Erik was especially popular in a group called "Picture Perfect Picture Book Friday;" every Friday, for year after year, readers shared appreciations using a shared template a common point of interest that held together geographically-distant and otherwise unrelated people. However temporary any one person's involvement in the group, it could continue, based on basic shared agreement of when to show up with writing, if a person wanted to. Routines like these could be structured enough to coordinate people, but flexible enough that it doesn't matter exactly which people show up exactly. Metaphorically, if we think of connected writing as being something like dancing, we'd not only be keeping in step or rhythm with our partners, we'd also be getting more comfortable by having some predictable genres of dance to do. Though the song that's playing might change on any given day, we'd still know how to move and where, around the floor with even a new partner. This makes people feel successful and safe.

3. Latch on to something bigger than a school year. One difficulty with building trust in online communities with our students is that the structure of schooling may work against that kind of continuity. In the United States, it is common to change classrooms and teachers in every year of schooling, K-12, and in the middle and upper grades to move between many teachers. On top of that, learners change schools, and different schools have different favored technologies of (digital) portfolio systems. How might we design ways for learners to build attachments online that can be drawn on for years to come?

For potential solutions, we might appreciate how Erik's connection to multiple communities of readers and writers was durable, despite his moving to a new town and school. Not only did he have a person platform to build on, he also had relationships with several different communities of readers and writers, of different sizes. And as we've seen, some of these were the biggest communities of all for readers online: Erik was a regular contributor to Amazon.com and GoodReads. Both were sites he built trust with by contributing regularly, and which in return would aggregate his review, by counting them and averaging them and holding them steady over time. Because his system of reviews combinable with those bigger outside sites, trust in TKRB could be distributed—not just something on his blog, but something that these others sites could visibly attest to and distributed on Erik's behalf. They served as long-standing records—not one, but several, different digital portfolios he could build on over time (should any one fail).

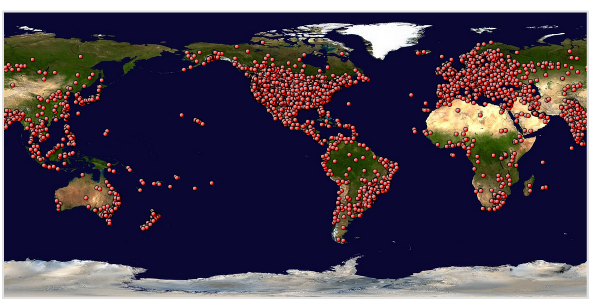
Erik's case would suggest we might want to have teaching and learning conversations about these kinds of questions: How do we as teachers and learners choose diverse and stable spaces for building our portfolios? What ethical concerns can we identify in choosing these sites, and how do we negotiate those? As a result of our choices, who will benefit most and least? What boundaries do we have for what we will and won't share publicly? In classrooms, we might begin the work of this diversified digital-portfolio building by seeking out online communities that are relatively steady and that we might want to engage with based on our students' interests. We might ask them to think with us to begin by thinking with us about where their writing fits in the world: Who else writes (about) this kind of thing? Where can we find them? How might we participate in support of their work, and how might they participate in support of ours?

On Circulation

As it turned out, Erik was correct that there was a public interested in what a kid had to say about books. Trying to get a general sense of how others took up Erik's work was harder in this case than the others in this dissertation study, because while they made a habit of summing up their achievements in lists and videos and the like, Erik just didn't do that kind of thing. As we've seen above, his approach was to put other people in the spotlight, and background himself.

However, Erik did offer one very broad view of its global reach. Tucked unassumingly at the very bottom of TKRB, past screens and screens of other things, was a tiny widget that aggregated TKRB's visitor statistics. As shown in Figure 4.3, it was a tiny, colored world map, dotted in red to show where Erik's visitors are coming from: literally, from all around the world. Following the widget to TKRB's viewer statistics, we can see it has recorded 315,000 unique visits over the previous four years—everywhere from the United States (71%), Canada (7%), the United Kingdom (5%), Australia (3%), and the remaining 14% in 189 other countries, everywhere from the Congo to Afghanistan to the Cook Islands to the Bahamas to Belarus.

Figure 4.3. Map of TKRB's visitors. (This Kid Reviews Books, n.d.-a)



Another broad view of TKRB's circulation I located was in its social media profiles where evidence of readership was aggregated by default. These showed TKRB has 4,000 subscribers to the blog, 2,000 to Twitter, and 1,000 to Facebook. Taken together with the above, these global statistics suggest that TKRB reached a wide range of people and places. But to really understand circulation in depth and detail, my analysis needed to go beyond these broad views of circulation to considered what kind of texts held this networked public together, who circulated them, and why. Here, again, my lens was shaped by ANT. I was interested in how things come together behind one banner (as they do in Callon's translation model, 1986) and in the genres that stabilize actor-networks (Spinuzzi, 2008).

Here is what I found using that ANT lens. TKRB was circulated by others mostly through these genres: *responses* to blog post in the comments section, and *book reviews* of Erik's that they circulated on the internet. In the next sections, I'll say more about who was doing that by taking the three most prominent groups and discussing them in turn: *readers*, *authors*, and *publishers* of children's books. I'll describe what their interests were in TKRB, and how their responses and uptake of TKRB allowed it to develop into an ever-expanding networked public.

"I know I'll be back here:" Comments on TKRB

On any given day of the year, and actually on most days of the year, the people who actively took up and circulated TKRB did so by writing comments at the bottom of the reviews on Erik's site. Typically, comments were brief, around one to four sentences long. As shown in Table 4.2 (Column 3), readers were quite responsive to Erik's reviews—leaving hundreds of comments on Erik's blog ever since its second year (2012). As I noted, over the years a core group of responders faithfully commented—and this core group continued to expand over time. As these findings would suggest, these were people interested not just in sharing about books, but also in doing so routinely—as we do in important or long-standing relationships. This ongoing the call-and-response pattern that is requisite for a public to continue to grow (See Barnett, 2009; Warner, 2002).

Table 4.2

Comments on Erik's Blog Posts (Cross-Section from April-May 2011-2014)

	Blog Posts by Erik	Comments on Erik's Posts	% of Comments by Readers	% of Comments By Erik (Replies)
2011-April	16	84	65% | n=55	35% | n=29
2011-May	16	82	62% | n=51	38% | n=31
2012-April	25	650	53% | n=342	47% | n=308
2012-May	19	532	56% | n=299	44% | n=233
2013-April	15	487	54% | n=263	46% | n=224
2013-May	19	583	52% | n=305	48% | n=278
2014-April	24	800	53% | n=428	47% | n=372
2014-May	20	685	53% | n=361	47% | n=324
Total	**154**	**3903**	**2104** **Average = 54%**	**1799** **Average = 46%**

TKRB's responders really appreciated Erik's responsiveness. Author Michelle Isenhoff ("Mrs. Isenhoff," as Erik addressed her, as he does all adults on his blog) recalled that Erik reached out to her early on in both of their blogging careers and suggested they follow one another's blogs. This is how their relationship was born—not just because they subscribed, but also because the subscription sparked ongoing interaction. This is what stood out to Mrs. Isenhoff, among the many other kid bloggers she'd met over the years—the commitment to keep responding:

> Most of them are just book bloggers. They read books and they blog them, which is great. I can think of a few. They don't interact like Erik, so I don't know them as well, but if you wanted those addresses, I'm sure I could find them…. People sometimes comment, but usually not. Erik is by far the most involved, the most interactive, the easiest kid to get to know… That's the strength of a blog: the ability to interact. And when you don't, your blog just doesn't go anywhere. And Erik is just a master at that—interaction. (Interview, 8-4-14)

Indeed, comments on TKRB revealed that many other people—readers and writers of all stripes—were attracted to TKRB by the responses Erik was putting on their blog. They'd return the favor by responding on his.

Interestingly it was a common discourse pattern for these people—even first time visitors—to name the pathway by which they'd arrived to TKRB and a pathway by which they planned to stay in connection. Clearly, these were practices that supported the upkeep of a conversation—again, what is required for a public. Comments on "About 'This Kid'—Erik!," illustrate how Erik's responders often indicated what pathway they expected to take when returning to TKRB. For emphasis, I've bolded these pathways they proposed for staying connected:

- Your blog is great! **I think I'll bookmark it** for the kids at our school's library! Thanks so much for stopping by and commenting on my son's artwork! (Hoffman, 2014)
- I'm just starting on my blog (bookwormsreadmorebooks) but thanks for visiting and commenting today. **I hope you'll continue to visit, I know I'll be back here.** (Cookiejarprincess, 2011)
- Hi Erik, I love the blog (and thanks for commenting on mine). I love both reading and writing stories for Young Adults and will definitely be using your website and reviews as a resource. I have a section of my blog for book reviews too and **I'd love your thoughts if you have some time**. Best of luck sir. **I've subscribed and will be back again** soon. (Culp, 2011)
- Hi Erik! **I added your awesome site to my awesome website**, For the Love of Picture Books.com. Your site is listed under the Reviewers section of the links page. Keep up the great reviews! (Sharann, 2012)
- Hey Erik, I like your reviews so much I've added you to my Book Reviewers blogroll, call over and have a look, I'd be pleased if you became a follower :) (The Story Reading Ape, 2013)

Erik's initiating comments inspired people to reciprocate with responses.

These responses led to further circulation of TKRB. To see the link between responses and circulation outside TKRB, consider the following conversation. It took place on a teenage boy's book review blog. He'd just posted a podcast of himself interviewing Erik about book reviewing, within which he expressed awe at Erik's big readership. One of Erik's adult fans (Cool Mom), a book blogger and long-time friend of TKRB, followed Erik's visit to the other boy's site, and then responded to the boy's interview with Erik starting up a conversation with the boy by commenting. A new relationship began:

- **Cool Mom:** One thing that Erik does that I think brings more visitors to his blog is that he reads and comments on a lot of other blogs. That's how I found him. He started commenting on my blog so I came over here and visited him. I know a lot of his fans (myself included) also talk him up to our friends and on our blogs. I've recommended his blog to several of my friends who have kids Erik's age and who might like to read the same books he reads or might be inspired to start doing their own writing.
- **Teen Blogger**: Thanks for listening to the podcast!!! You're absolutely right. Erik is definitely great and building and keeping relationships. I'm glad I could start one with you!
- **Cool Mom:** Always happy to meet new friends. Oh, and we are always looking for guests on our Word of the Week videos. Here is the link if you would like to participate. (Cool Mom, 2014)

Here, we see a demonstration of how TKRB spread through responses. Fans of TKRB would invite Erik to collaborate in something they were hosting (e.g., an interview of Erik, a review blog, a weekly blogging forum, a reading challenge, a special reading event, etc.). Then Erik would mention it briefly on his blog, and embed a link to the person's site. Then TKRB readers would often follow the links and leave responses that would serve as openings for conversation with new contacts in the reading or writing blogosphere—as Cool Mom suggested above, "new friends" and potential "guests" who might contribute participate in them by responding or contributing content to each other's blogs.

This kind of thing was common—TKRB fans "traveling" with Erik to meet the people he knew and respond to them. This practice if familiar to us adults who do professional networking; for example, imagine tagging after your most successful friend at a professional conference, passing a business card with everyone she stops to talk to, and then lingering behind to start up a conversation about your current projects and needs. Not a bad way to go about networking. Invite Erik to visit your blog, and his TKRB friends will come too. Follow where Erik travels out TKRB, and you can make new friends who like to appreciate other people—and maybe you too.

In sum, TKRB's responses facilitated connections between other readers and writers online. This was one way that it managed to become what ANT would call an *obligatory passage point* (OPP) (Callon, 1986), a point in the network through which others must pass in order to accomplish their goals. Hamilton (2011) describes the OPP "node" or "nexus" with especially "dense connections," which in effect defines the network, its actors, and their relationships (p. 259). Certainly, the "kid lit" blogosphere is vast—really not a group but a loose association defined by a common interest in books for children and youth. There were lots of niches in that group—for example, children's picture people weren't necessarily hanging out with middle grade fiction people (Susannah Leonard Hill, Interview, 7-30-14). Their interests were different. But Erik's being omnivorous in his book selections—reviewing from board books up through young adult books and e-books—allowed readers and writers of all stripes to participate.

Across the many kids and adults interviewed in this case, and the many different types of groups involved online in which they participated, what they remarked they had in common was Erik: “We know each other through Erik,” one picture book blogger explained, as to how and why she would be related to a middle-grades blogger (Susannah Leonard Hill, Interview, 7-30-14). Another blogger viewed Erik as a “hinge” connecting all the kid bloggers she knew: “It’s kind of been Erik at the center of this” (Michelle Isenhoff, Interview, 8-4-14). She also expressed how others looked to him as a central point of reference across different groups: “Everybody knows Erik in my middle-grade circles. Everybody knows Erik. And they really look to him as a leader among kids—among all book bloggers, really, because he’s such a novelty” (Michelle Isenhoff, Interview, 8-4-14).

And so, from far and wide, came all kinds of readers: kids, parents, grandparents, readers, authors, teachers, librarians, and publishers to TKRB. As I’ve argued, responses were a primary way that they connected both on TKRB and beyond TKRB. As such, we can understand how TKRB got circulated as a networked public: it wasn’t just performed by a boy putting up blog posts—it was performed by hundreds of responders moving within and through it, responding to Erik, responding to each other, and following TKRB anywhere and everywhere its posts might lead in order to connect with other readers and writers. As such, TKRB performed together. It was a networked public: punctuated, ongoing discourse held together by routine or standing types of re-circulation of texts. That so many people responded routinely and faithfully to TKRB for weeks and years on end is further evidence that circulating with Erik and TKRB did something worthwhile for them. It helped them toward their own goals. Following ANT, I was interested to know what different interests led them to come together at TKRB. At the center of this analysis was the most important and oft-performed genre of TKRB: the book review. Let’s look first at how interests converged around those book reviews, and pause to extrapolate from these findings what it is that readers and writers today might need to know about digital delivery. Then, we'll return to this discussion as we address the last research question in that case. We'll look at divergences in the interests of groups performing TKRB, and consider how these destabilizing forces might impact the future of TKRB and the future of literacy instruction.

"This Website is a Marvelous Idea, You Genius!": Book Reviews and Their Attractions

Year after year, just about everyone seemed delighted about TKRB's book reviews. A broad view of the groups who were interested in circulating them yielded these (unsurprising) categories: they were *readers*, *authors*, and *publishers* of books. More in-depth analysis, however yielded intriguing differences between each group's goals, which nonetheless were all served by their circulation of TKRB's book reviews. Let's start by distinguishing the interests of these differences. In truth, the categories overlapped significantly (which was part of the draw of TKRB), but we'll hold them apart temporarily for analytical purposes. Then, we'll double back to Erik's book reviews and see what it was about them that was so attractive. I'll discuss how each groups' interests were served as they took up TKRB's book reviews—the same genre—but in different ways.

To begin with, here are some broad descriptions of the groups. They are composite sketches are based on my observations and interviews with 15 adults and kids who participated in them:

Readers. TKRB's reader friends were mainly interested in getting honest recommendations for great books. Comments like the following from kids on TKRB illustrate what TKRB's readers were all about:

- Hi Erik I am ten and I need a book request from you. I am looking for some books I can read. I'm an advanced reader, and my teachers KNOW it. Thanks, and thanks again. (This Kid Reviews Books, n.d.-a)
- I will definitely [sic] use your site for my reading… I'd like to suggest a book

> series found in a library, sense [sic] i read that you read books that i like too. The series is callied [sic] “The Secret Series” and the first book is “The Name of This Book is a Secret”, it is very amusing and fun adventure like book, with a lot of mysteries. P.s. I’ve almost finished the Percy Jackson series. I’m currently finishing ”The Mark of Atheana”. I am 14 years old, and i think your [sic] are cool. (This Kid Reviews Books, n.d.-a)

As these comments suggest, readers were interested in books for children and youth, and especially in assessing their quality in order to make informed reading and purchasing decisions. Some were kids, but the vast majority were adults. Some hosted their own book review blogs. Some participated in a weekly blog hop, in which everyone would read and respond to each other’s reviews on their blogs. Others participated in social media forums, reader would share books they liked or ask for advice in choosing them. Though they were typically evaluative in their discussions of books, they focused on sharing books they actually liked—because ultimately, the goal was to find books to enjoy and learn from—books that would connect with them, the people they loved or had in their care: their children, grandchildren, classrooms, libraries, etc. In this way, the evaluations often displayed personal relevance and importance. They mostly read and reviewed fiction (written for children and youth), but liked being exposed to a variety of genres, as they took pride in knowing about a wide range of titles and in passing on recommendations that might suit other readers’ interest. They were interested in enjoying a positive, relational book culture among readers and authors online. As such, they typically gave little attention to books they didn’t like. Nonetheless, they expected each other to evaluate books fairly and honestly. They valued attention to editing so that their experience of a book was not interrupted by grammatical errors. At the same time, they were open to reading e-books in addition to print books. They were apt to have more than one profile on social media where they discussed books—like a blog, a Twitter account, and GoodReads profile. Their appetite for new books was insatiable. Especially, they gravitated toward new releases from their favorite authors. They also appreciated discovering up-and-coming new authors that people might not yet know about but should. To sum up, TKRB's reader friends' main interests were in honest recommendations of great books.

Authors. TKRB's author friends' were mainly interested in sharing supportive evaluations of books in order to encourage, improve, and promote writing—especially their own. The following comments from authors on TKRB are illustrative these interests:

- Thank you for your generous review, and all the great things you said about it. I know my daughter…and… the illustrator are going to be so excited to read your review, too, because they know what a popular celebrity you are in the book world. Your opinion means a great deal to us! Thank you, too, 'Fans of Erik' for the fantastic and encouraging comments on this blog. I'm so excited about all of this, I can't wait to share it with my family and friends! (Marshall, 2012)
- Thank you so much, Erik, for the exciting 5 bookworm review. Your good opinion really makes my day! I'm delighted you enjoyed the story, and especially that you consider it valuable for learning about the environment and conservation issues. I'll do my best to describe the creatures better in the next two stories, so you know right away what they are. (Twigstories, 2012)
- Thanks for liking my blog post Bert the Fox. I have a couple of books on LULU for free download you might like to have a look at. One is for GIRLS eeeuw it's Daisy and The Dust Angel and the other is for boys about nine years 3 Things That Might Have Happened. Would be delighted if you had a

look. – Cheers. (Diane, 2011)

This group was also interested in sharing evaluations about books—but for reasons that were a bit more complicated and conflicted. Some authors were kids, but mostly they were adults. They were interested in learning about knowing the field into which they were publishing: what readers were liking and what writers were trying and doing well. As such, they tended to foreground not the personal interests of readers, but professional interests as craftspeople. They especially liked models of great writing that might inspire them. They were the group who showed up most on popular weekly blog hop called Perfect Picture Book Friday (even more than the readers above, who were initially the blog hop's target audience). They were interested in being encouraged as writers, as well as in encouraging other writers, especially kids.

Authors also liked showing and telling each other about their writing processes, and favored interviews with each other for doing so. Among the different social media platforms and websites they each had, blogs were favored especially for how they provided the opportunity for ongoing interaction and community—things that could easily go missing for a writer who works at home in relative isolation. They were particularly interested in getting feedback, especially from kids who were in their target audience, but also from other writers who could help them improve their manuscripts. They valued other people publishing reviews of the books, as a promotional kindness, and would do this for other authors and hope they would do the same in return. Sometimes they would take each other's books on a blog tour—especially for a new launch—and write extended, positive remarks taking turns each day posting and responding to everyone else on the tour.

Authors were interested in feedback as an encouragement to keep writing, but also open to being instructive feedback, provided the critiques were well-intentioned and delivered with kindness. They hoped for feedback they gave to other authors to be reciprocated, but didn't necessary expect it would be. They frowned upon author's blogs that were relentlessly self-promoting of their own books: "Look at me! Look at me!" They saw it as empty and tedious at best, and phony and narcissistic at worst. Blogging about other people's books was a way to have something to talk about other than oneself, and a welcome one at that for most bloggers. They expected relationships to be mostly about relating to other readers and writers, not driven by marketing and sales at the front. They were far more interested in writing books than in promoting them, but recognized the latter as a necessary part of their work. This was true for all authors, whether they had traditional publishing houses behind them or the self-published. However, among these different types of authors, it was the self-published authors showed up in far greater numbers to TKRB, as we'll see more about below.

Publishers. TKRB's publisher contacts shared a common interest in having their books dispersed widely to readers and received well online. The following quotes exemplify the far ends of the spectrum of publishers interested in TKRB, ranging from self-published individuals to major multi-national publishing corporations:

- I don't have a publishing house. I don't have a publishing team. It's me!" (Michelle Isenhoff, Interview, 8-4-14)
- I am not going to wait on traditional publishing and that whole industry to see. To bless my thinking about why I want to write. I am just going to get out there and do it. (L.R.W. Lee, Interview, 8-25-14)
- Thank you for taking the time to review Spanky and linking him with those who follow your blog. Reading the responses made a gloomy rainy morning a bit brighter! I look forward to seeing your thoughts on B&N/Amazon/Good Reads and I hope you'll review some of author friend's books that are coming out. I'll send them your way. (LaNeve, 2013, July 12)

- Looky, Looky, I got a GOODIE! Won it through @ThisKid_Erik's blog! Thank you, Erik and @WaldenPondPress! :D :D :D (WriterSideUp, 2014)
- I do work a lot with Kid Lit bloggers like Erik and other kids like that, who basically are the children's literature media anymore, with the decline in magazines and newspapers. [This is] where so much of the fun happens. (Lara Starr, Interview, 9-12-14)

They were interested in having their own books taken up by as many readers as possible. As such, they were interested in evaluations of books, too—especially in positive evaluations of the books they had for sale.

Among the different kinds of publishers associated with TKRB, most were independent (or "indie) authors who self-published through very small presses or on-demand and e-book publishing avenues like Amazon.com's CreateSpace (https://www.createspace.com). Many were first or second time authors of middle grades and young adult novels, learning how to promote their books just through personal experience. Many actively sought after evaluations by reader; they especially sought after kid book bloggers who represented their target audience. They often collected praise for their books on websites devoted to the individual book or series—collecting reviews like seals of approval in the absence of a publisher's stamp. Many indies were especially interested in and supportive of other indies, as they liked getting advice and help with publishing elements they hadn't ever been taught in school—such as how to design or contract a book cover; how to launch a book online and build some buzz about it; how to create promotional materials; or how to run giveaways. They were interested in quality to varying degrees—they wanted to be good writers and better writers, but they didn't necessarily equate that with writing a perfect book, or even a book that was free of grammatical errors.

The final product of their writing was not really the point. The point had much more to do with the pleasure they got from writing, and the pleasure they hoped their readers would get. They were likely to interact with readers personally and thank them for their responses. Profit was a motivator for some, but rarely realized beyond nominal returns. Some were interested in someday being traditionally-published; others didn't care; and still others opposed that idea either because they saw traditional publishing as outdated and unnecessary, or saw indie publishing as an important political stance against the historical domination of publishing by handful of multi-national corporations (formerly known as the "Big Six," now the "Big Five") (Sax, 2012; Dearborn, 2015). They expressed pleasure and pride in their work finding its way into the world, but also noted tensions around the amount of time it took away from writing to facilitate that work.

Other kinds of publishers associated with TKRB were more expressly interested in high-quality, attractive, glossy content. They wanted to procure it, develop it, and keep it coming in a steady stream to inform and entertain their readers—something these media companies would earn revenue by doing. These included a range of media and —as in the other cases in this dissertation— increasingly large media companies that represented more and more people and things. These included: the local newspaper, other blogs, Amazon.com and its review section, and the major social media news site, The Huffington Post, that hooked up Erik and his writer pal Felicia with to do a live interview with international-bestselling author Rick Riordan on Skype as he revealed the cover for his forthcoming book. Other media companies included traditional publishing houses—many of the biggest names in all of children's publishing—all houses that Erik had a personal contact he could connect with and request things of by email. These companies were interested in Erik's readers—potential customers—and as such were interested in supplying Erik with free copies and promotional materials to give away each season with their new publications. Like all of the other publishers mentioned here, they were interested in who TKRB was connected to as a hub for very devoted readers and writers they could reach by marketing at the grassroots level. As this overview would suggest, publishers associated with TKRB were a diverse group—and as we'll see below [On (De|Re)Stabilization], their interests would sometimes divide and compete. But before we go there, let's focus on the main things about Erik's reviews they could all agree on.

Features of TKRB's book reviews where interests converged. Now that we have a better sense of the different interests involved with TKRB, we can see how book reviews allowed these different groups' interests to converge. Again, we'll use the lens of *translation*, which is ANT's conceptualization of how power gets constructed. As Callon (1986) explained it, translation is a process through which interests converge; when successful, it ends in the *mobilization* of many voices through one voice that appears to speak for the many. In this case, the different groups came together by taking up TKRB's book reviews and circulating them on TKRB and elsewhere online. In doing so, they inevitably reshaped the book review—as translation always bring with it some transformation (Latour, 1986b). Each person reshaped the book review according to his or her own needs. Below, I describe the most taken-up aspects of TKRB's books reviews: the *kid review* and the *rating*. I describe also how each group took up these aspects of TKRB's book reviews—serving the interests of TKRB while also reshaping the book review to meet their own needs.

The kid review. TKRB started with an audacious premise: that the perspective of "this kid" was something people needed to hear. Recall from above the image of the kid at the top of TKRB (Figure 4.1) and the bold title: THIS KIDS REVIEWS BOOKS. Also, recall how the problem was framed in "About 'This Kid'—Erik!". Its logic was this: Adults don't know what books to get kids, because they don't know what kids really like. Let's unpack that premise a bit: The suggestion is that adults want to get books in kids' hands that they will think are good, but they aren't really equipped to evaluate books for kids, because they aren't kids themselves, and so they can't know what a kid will see as good—at least, not with the accuracy a kid could. Soon TKRB would include more adults in this evaluation problem: that is, adults who write and publish books for kids: "Editors are normally adults, and so an adult will think of it one way" (Erik, Interview, 7-23-14). "I provide what a kid thinks about the book. Sometimes I see things in a story an adult won't think is cool or funny, but as a kid, I do" (Erik, Interview by LaNeve, 2013, May 7). So this is how TKRB framed the problem from the start:

- How we think about and see books is determined by our age;
- This creates a gap in perspective between kids and adults;
- This loss of perspective is to the detriment of kids (who don't get books they like), but those who are most at a loss are adults, who have a deficit in vision. They can't meet their own goals because they can't accurately evaluate the books they choose, write, or publish for kids;
- Adults can recover that loss of perspective by reading this kid's book reviews; because all of this implies that (notice here the leap)…
- This Kid's perspective is generalizable to other kids.

Erik delivers the ideas so gracefully that we have to really pause to even appreciate how bold the implicit messages he's sending actually are: It is the adults whose understandings are lacking (not the kids). And one kid, among all kids, can represent the rest because he is their age. What adult would buy into this idea: that one kid could represent all people of certain age, the giant group called kids? I am oversimplifying the matter, clearly; but this seems to me implied. And in fact, it was the kid aspect of the book reviews that people latched on to in droves and took up with great enthusiasm, collectively agreeing with the sentiment of this responder: "This website is a marvelous idea, you genius!" (Von Chette, 2011). One author-illustrator, Suzanne Bloom), even drew this fetching figure for Erik: the mythical all-knowing kid called Super Reader (Figure 4.4).. It would become a recurring image or logo for TKRB.

Figure 4.4. An illustrator's depiction of Erik as Super Reader. (This Kid Reviews Book, 2013, April 4)

What made this idea so attractive to readers, writers, and publishers? How did they take it up and use it for their own purposes?

Readers found the "kid" bit quite fetching. As we've seen, they were interested in finding good books for kids—either themselves or kids they cared for. Here was one way to relieve the problem: to accept the idea that one kid knows what other kids like:

- What better recommendation for a book for a child can you get than from another child. Brilliant! (Dawson, 2013)
- Yes, your site is very helpful. It'll help me learn what types of books kids are looking for or want to read. So thank you for this blog! (Romelle, 2013)

They were also attractive because of the general rarity of the age-based book review: there weren't that many kids who book bloggers knew, and so picking up on "the kid" aspect gave them a way to be in-the-know about someone up-and-coming (another thing these readers liked). Again, as one of Erik's mentors explained, "Everybody knows Erik in my middle-grade circles. Everybody knows Erik. And they really look to him as a leader among kids—among all book bloggers, really, because he's such a novelty" (Michelle Isenhoff, Interview, 8-4-14). They would take up his reviews as something special, on these grounds among all other reviews—linking to his reviews, putting them on their blog rolls, inviting him to be a guest reviewer on their sites, interviewing him about how he did his book reviews, etc. Inevitably, when they wrote about him or introduced his reviews, they would mention his age and the name of website which importantly made it impossible to miss the big point: he was a kid.

The kid aspect was equally attractive to authors. Recall the kinds of things they wanted: to know their audience, to be encouraged, to get feedback, to promote their books, and the like. In TKRB, they found a way to fulfill those desires: if you accept the idea that this kid can speak for other kids, then perhaps you as an author could know through Erik how other kids would receive your book. The following examples suggest the value authors place on Erik's reviews due to his age:

- It is all the more special to have someone your age on board [with our writing group] and giving us feedback on our writing as we go along. (Julie, 2012)
- A review from a kid like yourself means much more to me than a review by an adult, because you're the audience I'm writing for. Thank you so much. (Pickett, 2013)
- Thank you for the review, Erik. I was interested to see how a younger person would take this YA story. (Andrews, 2013)
- Thank you so much Erik! I am glad that you enjoyed the book! The best reviewer of a book, is someone from the target audience!" (Hershenson,

2012)

In these examples we can also see hints of the morale-boost that a kid's perspective offered writers. To believe that evaluations by kids were more accurate or important than adults (because they were the target audience) could help save face for authors. All authors inevitably endure rejection and critique as part of their work. Perhaps adults just don't get it, and for that matter, it's the end-reader that maybe matters most of all: "I actually do have kids reading and liking my books. I had adults reading my books and really dislike them. Because I'm quite descriptive and I use kid language. I'm like, 'I am writing for kids.'" (Julie Grasso, Interview, 7-26-14). Erik told me about a time when he tweeted about how much he liked a story to one of his favorite authors (a New York Times bestseller):

> [The author tweeted back], "Thanks, Erik, that's one that the critics have all been saying that it's terrible.' And I was like, 'They probably don't get it. Or I probably get it cause I'm a kid and I understand it.' And he's like, 'That just made me cry. And that made my day.' And that was one of the highest points [in the history of my blog]. (Interview, Erik, 7-23-14)

Indeed, both traditionally-published and indie authors would frequently take up Erik's book reviews by responding in the comments with their thanks, or expressing how gratifying it was to see how much Erik enjoyed their work. Indies would do that and sometimes take further steps and ask for personal reviews of manuscripts in progress—what is known in the industry as beta-reading. This was another way to get feedback from Erik, but here shifting it to a private space where they could learn more from Erik without the worry of a public or without being finished with a book.

For self-publishers, the "kid" aspect of the review was a selling-point. In the absence of vetting by a traditional publisher, vetting by a kid was another way to go. As one indie author explained, the age-based evaluation was something parents seemed to buy into as well:

> I use Erik to review my books. He's typically on the back cover. There's a snippet on the back cover by Erik… And I always put what age he is. Because to me that's a huge opportunity for a potential reader to say, "Oh, okay! My kid is however old." Cause most times for me, it's parents looking at books, as opposed to kids looking at books. (L.R.W. Lee, Interview, 8-25-14)

As shown here, indie authors would export the praise to their book covers and websites for the book. They'd also recruit kids to write about their feedback when they launched books—doing a virtual tour across bloggers to announce an indie author's new release (see Appendix H for a typical blog tour book post by Erik). Indie authors appreciated what they were getting something from kids, but also expressed a sense of what they wanted to be giving to kids—encouraging them and teaching them as writers, too. As Erik's indie mentor expressed to her peers:

> We also have to keep a sharp look out for kid bloggers, reviewers, and writers. They're out there, too, just not in the same numbers as adults. After all, kids are our target audience. They're a great source of information, feedback, and contacts. They are a unique window to the kids "out there." (Not to mention, they're the up-and-comers, and I think it's our job, it's our pleasure, to encourage them. Guess that's the teacher in me again.) (Michelle Isenhoff, Interview, 8-4-14)

So this was not just using kids to market to the kids; as we've seen with this group of indies as authors, reciprocity was an important part of the rating.

Major publishers didn't value the "kid" part in the same way. They were more interested in the system of reviews that gave them their existing credibility through institutions recognized as high-status reviewers (e.g., *School Library Journal*). But they were open to linking with Erik in social media, and so did end up circulating “This Kid” anyway. To retweet or tweet, they’d tag: @ThisKid_Erik. To post his review on Amazon, they’d signal: ThisKidReviewBooks. So whether they believed all of those suppositions about kids or not, if they wanted to get their book circulating through TKRB, they’d need to circulate these words: ThisKidErik or ThisKidReviewsBooks. And so these words, too, became *immutable mobiles* (Latour, 1987): they were easy to spread; they held together well; and they represented a whole lot of people and things. All in This Kid. All in one. That is mobilization.

The rating. The other aspect of TKRB that was often taken up was the rating. Those cute little green bookworms at the bottom of TKRB’s book review weren’t just cute; they were, in fact, really important to how and why TKRB’s reviews were spread by others. In an earlier section (On Distribution), I also called these immutable mobiles (Latour, 1987). I noted that they were mobile, stable, and particularly combinable—because it was the 5-point bookworm scale was compatible with leading websites where readers review and purchase books, for example, Amazon (the online bookseller) and GoodReads (the social media site for readers). The bookworm scale’s compatibility with other social media sites—especially with Amazon—proved to be very interesting and useful to readers, writers, and publishers.

Let’s see how these five-point ratings translated onto Amazon.com and facilitated TKRB’s mobilization. Revisiting TKRB’s typical book review in Appendix G, we can see notice how it ends in a 5-star bookworm rating. Revisiting TKRB’s typical book tour post in Appendix H, we can notice it also embeds a bookworm rating: “FIVE OUT OF FIVE BOOKWORMS FOR BENEATH THE SLASHINGS! :D.” (This Kid Reviews Books, 2012). TKRB’s book reviews where then posted to Amazon, where its five little green bookworms were easily translated into five little yellow stars on Amazon. As shown in Appendix I, Erik also added (when applicable) a disclosure notice as part of the translation onto Amazon: "Note-I received a free copy of this book in exchange for a fair review" ("Customer Reviews," 2015). From here, Amazon.com would take up Erik's review and rating onto their website. In doing so, they would automatically aggregate his number of stars into a small box showing the total of the book's reviews, ratings, and average rating. (Figure 4.5)

Figure 4.5. Aggregated ratings for one indie chapter book on Amazon.com ("Customer Reviews," 2015)

Amazon.com would also aggregate stats for Erik in a reviewer profile: his ranking (#3,936 out of about 10,000 reviewers based on customer votes and most recent reviews); his helpfulness as voted by customers (92% helpful), and his total number of reviews (566 helpful out of 616).

I interpreted these aggregations as examples of what Latour (1986b) called deflation. Recalling Chapter 2, deflation involves "cascades" of increasingly simpler and smaller texts that represent more and more people and things (p. 26). Latour argues that those who dominate the world do so because they dominate records that connect millions of others: "Once files start being gathered everywhere to insure some two-way circulation of immutable mobiles, they can be arrayed in cascade: files of files can be generated and this process can be continued until a few men consider millions as if they were in the palms of their hands" (Latour, 1986b, p. 26).

In this instance of Amazon.com's review aggregate, we can also see an exemplar of what ANT would call mobilizatio*n*—the one speaking for the many (Callon, 1986). By being combinable and cooperating in Amazon's system of ratings, what TKRB effectively did was enroll Amazon.com in TKRB. As a successful network-builder, he must enroll people *and* things (Latour, 1987). At the same time, of course, Amazon.com was enrolling TKRB—each serving their own interests here as well. If Erik was a good spokes*person* for Amazon.com, it was a good spokes*thing* for him. The bookseller could hold TKRB's reviews steady in a highly-trafficked website where the reviews could be easily searched. It could put his reviews next to the highly-condensed view of aggregated rating (Figure 4.3)—like a little map that gives us the illusion that its 100% is the whole world. [A Latourian (2005) term for this kind of compact world view illusion is a *panorama*]. The illusion of the readers condensed into space is a powerful one! And it was very, very attractive to TKRB's readers.

The draw to participate in this kind of mobilization for readers, authors, and publishers is perhaps self-evident. For readers, an aggregate of ratings would invite their trust of a rating and a stronger sense that they were making a good purchasing decision—if lots of people like it, perhaps we'd be apt to believe it's a "good" book. Also attractive would be the disclosure about having received a free copy "for a fair review" ("Customer Reviews," 2015), or the signal from Amazon that that a review is a result of a verified purchase. Readers would want authentic reviews—the appearance of something they could trust, which might come along with the aggregation of ratings. Meanwhile, for authors and publishers the aggregated rating would serve as recommendation for people to buy their book; if people searched for books with four and five stars (the most highly-recommended books), then their book might come up—even if they only have a handful of ratings (see, for example,

Appendix I, a book review with just four ratings but an attractive rating of 4.8/5 stars). Self-publishing authors often supported one another in book reviews, or exchanging reviews, and put those on Amazon. So this also would give them the opportunity to browse the reviews for other kids and reviewers they might want to meet. From these reviews and ratings, they could trace back through a rater's profile and find their websites, respond and interact, etc.

Indies expressed mixed emotions about Amazon's dominance in the market. For many, the point of indie publishing was to get beyond the conglomerate of the "big six" publishers (Dearborn, 2015) who've been the one to speak for the many for so long. Wary of another monopoly, one indie author explained how important it was for her to diversify online, but at the same time, she appreciated Amazon (as did other indies) because it was the source of most of her traffic and revenue:

> I want to make sure that I'm spread out. But right now Amazon has been the best thing to happened to publishing for the little people like me… I just got online sales in the last couple days, and Amazon is the huge one. All the others [self-publishing sites] together make up about 25% of what I get from Amazon. (Michelle Isenhoff, Interview, 8-4-14).

Finally, for traditional publishers, customer reviews like those Erik was doing would be important as well. The "editorial reviews" their books got from major reviewing institutions didn't go in the customer ratings on Amazon; they were noted in a separate section, and not linked to the ratings scale of a book. As such, TKRB's reviews gave them something they couldn't solicit from the usual institutions. Traditional publishers would show up in ever greater numbers to sponsor TKRB in doing reviews. They would surge in 2014 and compete with indie publishers for TKRB's reviews, as their common interests put them indirectly into competition. In the next section [On (De|Re)Stabilization], we'll consider how TKRB responded to the tumult in overlapping interests when they were in competition. But first, let's pause to consider what these interests converging in TKRB might suggest as consideration for the next generation in literacy education.

What Might This Have To Do With Writing In Schools?

As educators, we might be astounded that the key genre attracting this worldwide network was essentially a repackaged version of maybe the most traditional genre of writing in schools of all: the book report. What could seem more innocuous? It's a little summary of the book, and what a kid liked about it, and what could be improved. It was a format Erik learned in school (Interview, 7-23-14). But would his teachers ever have expected the little review was capable of attracting a world of people and things, and that they would even complete to sponsor the kid who wrote them? Observing how TKR's book reviews became attractive and to whom, we might consider the following in our performances of digital literacies with learners in our classrooms:

1. Prioritize interaction. It's not having the blog or website that matters, it's the follow-through—the interaction. This is what made TKRB so celebrated. It was a platform for participation—like a party, if you will, and Erik, like a great party host: "Erik is just a master at that—interaction." (Michelle Isenhoff, Interview, 8-4-14). Erik hosted (written) conversation—and he learned how to do this by participating on the sites of other writers who were doing the same (e.g., holding weekly blog hops, writing meet-ups, seasonal contests, and challenges). Also, the draw wasn't just to see Erik—it was the draw of meeting Erik's other friends—using TKRB as a meeting spot where they could be introduced—writer to reader, or reader to writer, or reader to reader.

In classrooms, we might ask: How much interaction are our blogs and websites inviting? Are they platforms for interaction, and if not, how might we make them so? This lens can help us avoid making inconsequential blogs—neglected things that "don't go anywhere" (Michelle Isenhoff, Interview, 8-4-14).

As this may be new to many educators, we might see it as a point of inquiry with our classes: What might we host? Who might want to come? How do we invite their participation? What makes a good host? Who do you follow online that is a good host? What do they do? For example, an inordinate number of kids I interviewed referenced how fascinated they were with the quality of Rick Riordan's responses on Twitter; they remarked on his humor and consistency, and how he gracefully managed awkward comments and selectively responded to them. Just as we do when observing finely-crafted texts in classrooms, we might observe examples of noteworthy, widely-popular written interaction online. This would extend the purview of craft lessons for writing from books into the craft of online written communication. In this, we might adapt basic tools of discourse analysis (e.g., written transcripts that hold dialogue still) in order to appreciate the art of writing for social media more fully.

2. Mind the intersection of publicness and publicity. In classrooms, if we are even talking about commercial entities (which may not be very much), they are often talked about in relation to critical media literacy and safety. It is possible that we might go in the direction of advocating for spaces free of all commercialism for learners in schools—sites that lock children's writing away from public interaction in the name of their learning and safety. An alternative possibility would be to take forays together where we intersect on sites with commercial interests (at least sometimes), with an eye not only toward critique, but in addition, toward how people are appropriating those powerful commercial sites to serve civic interests. In this case, we see that even though TKRB associated with a commercial platform like Amazon.com, he's using it intentionally to promote the people he cares about. He was not unaware of the controversies over pricing going on with other publishers; in fact, he brought up to me that he was quite interested in it (Erik, Interview, 7-23-14).

This might give us pause as educators. What associations do we reject outright? And might it be worth considering, and even experiencing, with young people what the affordances and constraints are in negotiating with entitles that profit from our participation? If we did so, it might be a way to model the dilemmas that they will be expected to face in their lives as writers—and perhaps already do. We might pay particular attention to the kinds of things Erik and his writer friends were doing. They enrolled the commercial platform to distribute their grassroots messages—not necessarily to generate money but to generate connections that would motivate one another to continue to write. They also negotiated the balance of publicity and self-promotion with the counter-balance of publicness and response to others. In a participatory culture, relationships between civic and commercial entities are increasingly complicated and intertwined. With our students, we could locate examples of civic interests that co-exist happily, or even co-opt, commercial entities. In these ways, we might develop learners' sensitivities to the complexities and possibilities of democratic participation in a networked and participatory communication landscape.

On (De|Re)Stabilization

TKRB attracted a steady flow of newly interested readers, authors, and publishers. This gave it some stability. As we've seen, it developed a rhythmic, call-and-response pattern that connected to more and more new people. Further, its book review was routinely mobilized by others. The result was a steadiness of TKRB through the four years it has been performed (to date). But no network is ever quite stable—as we're reminded by both theoretical lenses, ANT and publics. In order to explore potential points of destabilization in TKRB, I focused my analysis on its temporality. What I found was that its rapid and steady drum beat of responses and reviews was attributable to a particular genre of book: the new release. Its demanding timing was TKRB's greatest source of stability *and* instability.

As I discovered, new releases put TKRB in the company of an ever-increasing number of publishers, traditional and indie, who were competing with one another for the attention of readers. This created the constant renewal of attention TKRB needed as a networked public; but it also introduced a relentless pace that Erik and his parents cued me toward in our interviews. This was a lot for a boy to keep up, although he loved the challenge of doing so.

I also noted that there was a potential conflict in where these new releases were leading Erik as a reader-writer, and where his schools might want him to go. In the final sections of this case, I synthesize data from across TKRB's development over four years showing its trending toward new releases. Then I'll discuss aspects of new releases that were potentially destabilizing for Erik as a child and as a literacy learner. There were at least two: the *accelerated pacing* and *shifting quality expectations for children's literature*. I'll share how Erik and his parents negotiated those, and draw those insights into recommendations for literacy educators who'll be helping children to negotiate their reading and writing lives in a participatory culture.

The New Release

"Publics act historically according to the temporality of their circulation" (Warner, 2002, p. 68). In the case of TKRB, the temporality associated with its readers and authors and publishers was oriented around books that were new releases. By this term, I mean a book published within three months or less of Erik's review, or a pre-release|advance publication. As consumers in contemporary social life, most of us are very familiar with how the new release works. Retail stores are constantly updating their inventory, bidding for our return each week and each season in new ways by offering some latest new thing. In return, we as consumers get something, too: new things to be interested in and providers we trust to bring those new things to our attention efficiently and predictably.

All three of the different TKRB groups discussed above were highly interested by the new release:

- **Readers** had an insatiable appetite for new books. Continuing to read an author's books offered trust and continuing connection; they especially loved books that came out over time in series.
- **Authors** had a persistent need for feedback. Putting out new books regularly could create a waiting readership that would appreciate their writing and encourage them to keep doing it. As one author wrote: "Thank you again Erik for another wonderful review :) Hopefully I can get book 3 finished in the not too distant future." And Erik replied: "No, thank YOU Mr. Everleigh! I can't wait for #3! :D (This Kid Reviews Books, 2013, April 29). Just as Erik would persistently ask readers to "Please come again!," to authors he would consistently push them for a new book: "I hope a sequel is in the making!.. When will it be out? I can't wait!" (This Kid Reviews Books, 2013, April 11).
- **Publishers** wanted to recruit new readers and maintain loyal readers for their books. New releases would provide a way to keep bidding for attention from new audiences, while also keeping customers interested in coming back again. They were also important to publishers competing with one another for attention.

In sum, new releases spoke to people's shared interests with one another, but also to their competing interests. The latter was true among the different kinds of publishers.

It was independent authors (indies) who initially flooded TKRB with new releases. Table 4.3 shows a cross-section of TKRB's book reviews over four years. In its first year (2011), 100% of the books reviewed were traditionally-published; that is, they were books distributed by established for-profit publishing houses with broad name-recognition that choose manuscripts very selectively, edit, and market them. But things changed for TKRB, and quickly. By its second year, less than half of its reviews were of traditionally-published books, as indie authors requesting reviews from Erik now had independently-published books making up 62% of all reviews. During this second year, Erik had put a systematic process in place for authors to request reviews (see above, "Book Review Requests"), and he'd responded to requests. Further, he'd inspired more to come in the third year, by which time independently-published books accounted for 71% of books reviewed that year.

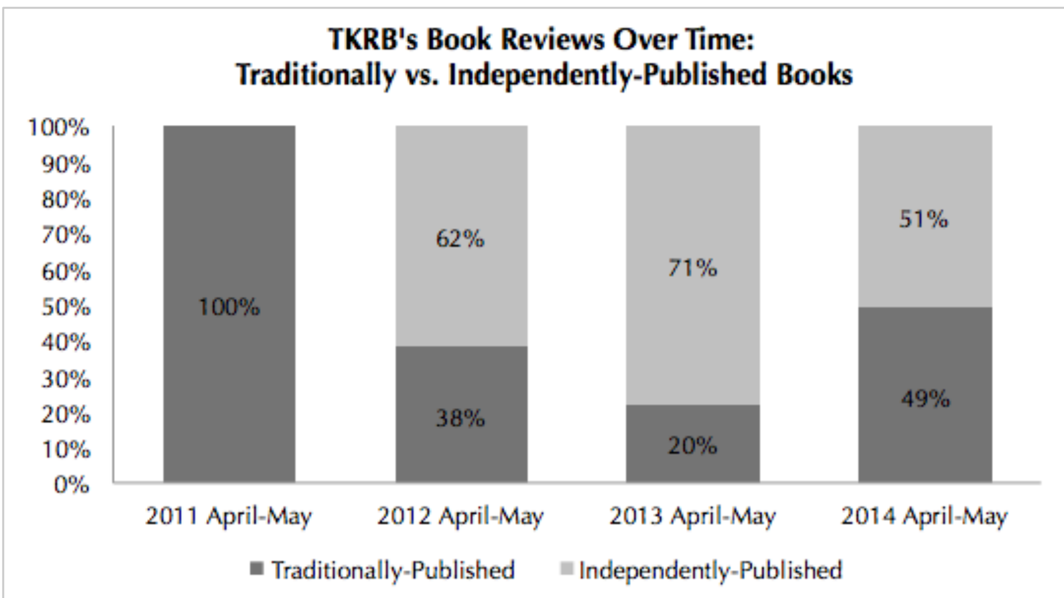
In TKRB's fourth year, there was yet another reversal: Where indies had been surging ahead in the previous year, now traditional and independently-published books were neck-in-neck, or nearly equal in number on TKRB. By this time, traditional publishing houses seemed to have recognized the potential of grassroots marketing campaigns involving bloggers. Major publishers would routinely send Erik their catalogs each season, and he'd request the books he wanted to review. In addition, they'd send other new materials that he might choose to promote, including promotional materials that were timed with new releases so that Erik could do giveaways to his readers. As one Senior Publicist at a major publisher explained, the draw to TKRB was "the level of the engagement on his site" from other authors he'd gotten on his site and (again suggesting competition) the other publishing houses on his sites; this led her to put TKRB on her "short lead" list for the company's new releases:

> You know, he gets a lot of comments… And he's consistent on Facebook and Twitter, and he will always tag our Chronicle books, and he is approaching it in a very professional way…Because he is so consistent, he is on my sort of 'short lead list' that I call it. So how it works at Chronicle is that our advances are very very few. And those just go out to the trade publications. And those are about five months ahead of time. And about

three months before publication, we send out to our 'short lead' people. We have a shorter time that they can turn around their reviews or interviews that they're going to do on the books. So he's just a regular part of my 'short lead' list. So I just continually send him books that I think are appropriate for him throughout the year. (Lara Starr, Interview, 9-12-14)

Table 4.3

TKRB's Book Reviews: Traditionally vs. Independently-Published Books (Cross-Section from April-May 2011-2014)

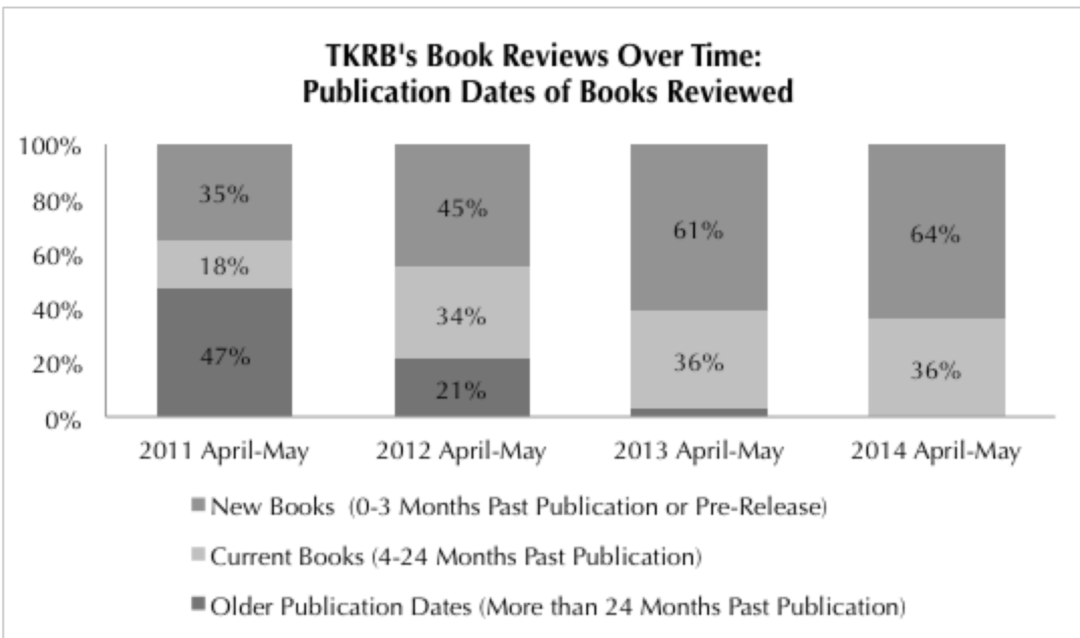


As this quote confirms, the new release was promotional and its timeline was a pressing one. This was also evident among indie publishers' practices for launching new books with highly-orchestrated blog tours, in which Erik would post on a particular day. But as the quote above also makes clear, the timeline of the new release wasn't just demanding, it was persistently so—she had new releases to send to him "continually… throughout the year." So, the pace was not *Quick! Now! But Quick! Again! And again! And again!*

The effect was that new releases came to dominate Erik's review. As Table 4.4 shows, by its fourth year the majority of TKRB's reviews were new releases (64%). By years three and four, new releases or current books published in the past two years, accounted for 97% and 100% respectively. "Older" books (more than two years past publication) went from being half of Erik's reviews in the year 1 (2011) to none of in year 4 (0%).

Table 4.4

TKRB's Book Reviews Over Time: Publication Dates of Books Reviewed (Cross-Section from April-May, 2011-2014)



This constant influx of new reading material, and free reading material, was stabilizing to TKRB. As I've suggested above, it continually renewed the attention of readers, authors, and publishers. But we might debate whether this timing served the interests of Erik as a boy and as a developing reader and writer. Some of the demands this would place on him were potentially destabilizing to TKRB. Here is how Erik and his parents responded.

(De|Re)Stabilization #1: Pacing. The ever-increasing influx of new releases to TKRB exemplifies what could be the most challenging feature of public discourse: it is notoriously demanding. "Public discourse craves attention like a child. Texts clamor at us. Images solicit our gaze. *Look here! Listen! Yo!"* (Warner, 2002, p. 62). Erik had an almost daily influx of responses, requests, interviews, and the like. "I end up each day like getting fifty emails," he explained (Interview, 7-23-14). This was something his parents helped him learn to manage. And to this point, they exemplified Warner's (2002) other point about publics: they are made of attention, and as such, it falls upon us to select them.

So, here was a point for Erik's learning: how to purposefully direct his attention in a flurry of competition for it. There were several ways his parents helped him restabilize TKRB by setting a pace that worked for him:

- Establish a calendar for reviews (Erik, Interview, 7-23-14)
- Reduce the number of days per week he posted reviews (from 5 down to 3) (Erik, Interview, 7-23-14)
- Specify a system for requesting reviews, and set up clear expectations for how long reviews would take (This Kid Reviews Books, n.d.-c)
- Defer work to a colleague: "I do often refer books I can't review to other kid book reviewers" (This Kid Reviews Books, n.d.-c)
- Create a queue for reviews and only let it get so long ("I am all filled up! Sorry I am not accepting review requests right now. Please check back in a bit when I get through my TBR pile! " (This Kid Reviews Books, n.d.-c)
- Write a volume of reviews, especially in the summer, and auto-schedule their delivery for the months ahead ("Like right now I have 2 months-worth ready to go!") (Erik, Interview, 7-23-14)

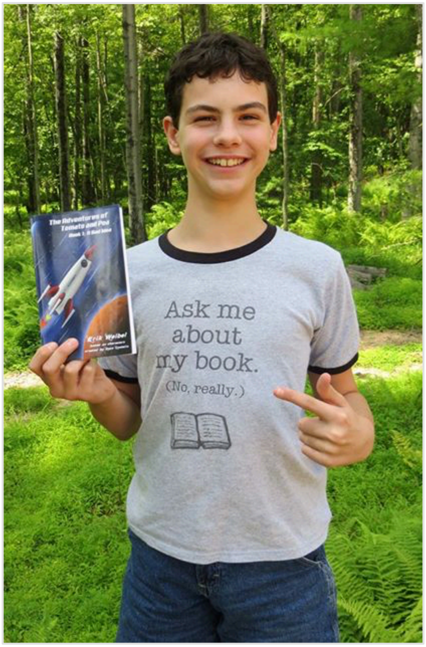
Erik's mom also acted as "his little personal secretary," as she described it. She'd go through emails and do the routine work of sending out a form rejection letter if he was closed to review, and she'd delete anything that "seems inappropriate or things that just aren't necessary for him to have his attention to" (Interview, Ginny & Erik, 7-23-14). This allowed Erik to keep his focus on the "creative" end of the blog, while she and her husband would take on the "business end" of it: "Erik also tends to be a kid who wants to do everything. We've had to put limits on what he accepts to do, and he's pretty good about it. He needs time to be a kid." (Ginny, Interview, 7-25-14). Though not being able to say yes to everyone wasn't something Erik enjoyed, he understood why: "I would love to read them all, but sadly I don't have enough time, but it also gives me the time to do other things I like and just have time to play" (Interview, 7-23-14). [This concern was also expressed by the several other children and parents who I interviewed.] Still, Erik committed 4-5 hours a day to TKRB: before and after school, and during breakfast. That's a lot of time, people might say; but perhaps it is on par with the time each day many American kids spend watching TV—another thing that This Kid chose not to pay attention to (Erik, Interview, 7-23-14).

(De|Re)Stabilization #2: Quality. New releases shifted Erik's reading diet toward indie books. A skeptical reading of this trend might ask: Wasn't this potentially destabilizing of Erik's taste in writing? It is customary for educational standards to promote children's learning to read, value, and emulate 'high-quality' children's literature (e.g., Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). In addition, we teach them that grammar matters a great deal when it comes to publishing—mistakes in grammar should be eradicated on writing intended for wider public audiences, lest the author be judged as careless or ignorant or both. But Erik was paying most attention to authors who were new to the craft, including many admittedly striving to improve the quality of their writing. Their books weren't vetted by professional publishers, nor even necessarily checked over by professional copy editors; they might have lots of grammatical errors or even just announce themselves as being unfinished versions that were meant to be improved ("beta versions"). We might wonder: Would constant exposure to these kinds of texts undo this reviewer's capacity to make sound evaluations? Would his standards for what counts as good writing and good reading run amuck? And what would happen to him in school? Would enrollment in a networked public of readers and writers somehow disrupt his experience of literacy learning in school? The answers are mixed: with writing standards, no disruption; with reading standards, yes disruption. Let's take a closer look at both outcomes.

Quality in writing. Though reading lots of unvetted books could have been destabilizing to Erik's discrimination of quality in writing, it actually had the opposite effect. Through his relationships with indie books and authors, Erik refined the quality of his own writing and helped others to recognize the fine qualities in their own writing. Let's see an example of how that worked.

All the while he was reviewing, Erik was working on his craft as a writer. He participated in online writing courses, annual writing events, and weekly forums for writers to get feedback (mostly with adults). Eventually, with the help of his writing mentors, Erik completed an adventure novel for middle-grades readers called *The Adventures of Tomato and Pea*. As was commonplace in this writing community, Erik self-published his book via Amazon.com's *CreateSpace* (https://www.createspace.com); this made it accessible for purchase at the click of a button as an e-book or a glossy, bound, print-on-demand paperback (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6. Photo of Erik promoting his self-published novel.



Like other indie authors, he then arranged for an online book tour (Figure 4.7), during which each day one assigned blogger would review or otherwise publicize his book to their readers (and to each other, all the stops on the tour being linked in theory).

Figure 4.7. Book tour banner for Erik's self-published novel.

It is a humorous and well-crafted book. As a literacy educator, I noted how it reveals Erik's deep understanding of the science-fiction genre. As a reader, I couldn't put this little adventure book down and devoured it one sitting. His revisions exceeded anything we would expect in schools—more than a year in the making. Many rounds of revision and editing were done with his writing mentor, indie author Michelle Isenhoff, as well as readings and critiques by other writing mentors Erik met online. In fact, all of the kid authors I interviewed in TKRB's wider network spoke to how rigorously they edited and were in the habit of exchanging many drafts of their writing with mentors online and/or off. Though their final products varied in quality of editing in the end, their intentions and experiences of the writing process were that indie publishing involved them in editing more than ever in their lives. In fact, many lamented and felt being burned out by editing. As to the question about their own writing standards, for Erik (and these other kids), the re-stabilizing answer to the question of quality wasn't to stop reading indie books, it was to try writing one of their own. If anything, it increased their appreciation of what rigorous editing was all about. In the end (at least to date), Erik still aspires to be a traditionally-published author, and one of his greatest sources of pride as a writer is his invited column in a newspaper—two points that suggest that he still holds a strong appreciation for writing that is vetted and selected for its quality.

But while Erik might be very rigorous with his own writing, he was generous in his appraisal of other people's writing. As his mother noted, he could find something positive in just about every book (Ginny, Interview, 7-25-14). This was something two of Erik's writing mentors both shared in common—they spoke to me about the need to be mindful of having grace with writers so as not diminish their enthusiasm to keep going. It was something Erik also demonstrated as he looked up on other's writing. His eye was trained on the positive, even amidst a field of generally newer authors and semi-corrected manuscripts. Though he declined to review some of them, he obviously accepted a great number of them. As he did, his stance was to continually lift their finer features, and then address only minor critiques (if any), with the intention of helping them improve their next attempts. He'd also encourage them to do those next attempts as quickly as possible. He seemed to know intuitively that they needed someone, somewhere, who was waiting to see what they would do next. So like his mentors, he would show grace on grammar for indies when they didn't disrupt the reading too much: "I hate to read a self-published book FULL of mistakes (a little is fine – nobody is perfect!)" (Erik, Interview by LaNeve 2013). Correctness in grammar was recognized as being present or not, but also was put in its place, subservient to the needs and context of the individual writer. To sum up, rather than being destabilized by evaluating lots of writers who were still learning their craft, these book reviews actually further stabilized Erik's discrimination of quality by inviting him to find it wherever it might be emerging, and by teaching writers into awareness of their finest moments so they could create more of them—and then send them along to him.

Quality in book selection. Though Erik's writing wasn't destabilized, this stream of new releases—and the community it involved him in—did disrupt what he'd been thinking about books in school and what it meant to achieve as a reader. A brief story about "Reading for Renn" (one that Erik tells proudly) will illustrate the point.

Erik's school, like many others, used a system called Accelerated Reader (AR) that designated different point values to children's books. Points are earned in this system by reading books independently and then taking quizzes on those books at school. Points are accumulated across a school year—often leading toward prizes and public recognition that singles out star readers in the school. Erik had been a proud champion of AR in his school, holding the all-time school record, and increasing that record annually. He kept his TKRB fans apprised of his work toward his AR goals for each year.

But his relations there changed things about him as a reader. For one thing, he decided to use his AR points to raise money. He asked TKRB readers to pledge a certain amount of money for each point he read. And why? To raise money to help an indie author in Erik's blogging and writing community pay for a necessary brain surgery to relieve her young son's epileptic seizures. Leading with his Super Reader image (Figure 4.4), he raised over $1500, which included a matching donation from a small press. In this project, Erik seemed to be rethinking his school's reading system, bending it toward the values associated with his blogging community. There, reading wasn't about competition and individual reward, it was about collaboration and doing something for and with other people in the world.

Dramatizing that shift in mindset, in Year 4, Erik quit the AR system altogether. He explained to his readers on TKRB:

> I took 180 tests equal to 180 books this school year (and yes I read a lot more books than that, but they weren't AR books – that's one of the problems I have with the program… So now that I broke my old school record, I am going into retirement (just for AR – not reading ;) I don't want to have to worry if a book is an AR one or not anymore. (This Kid Reviews Books, 2014, May 17)

Here, we can see how Erik's experiences engaging with indie authors and their new releases was destabilizing to the ideas about reading promoted by his school's AR system. He had clearly invested so much time and energy into that model, but now he associated it with a narrowing of his reading field. The school's system couldn't re-represent or accumulate his reading achievement the way, say, Amazon could, or his blog could—which could accommodate books from a wide range of authors of all different qualities.

The impact of this shift in mindset on Erik's school experience remains to be seen. In his most recent project, Erik's omnivorous reading diet continues to shine.

With his indie author friend, 12-year-old Felicia, Erik hosts *The Write Chat*, a monthly YouTube live interview show with authors about their craft. The roster is a mélange of indie authors who have mentored Erik, Felicia and New York Times Bestselling authors. Just like on TKRB, they are all mixed in and valued for where they are and what they are doing as writers. So Erik hasn't rejected either traditional or indie publishing; he is trying out welcoming them onto the same stage. Yet another public is being imagined and summoned by Erik. This time, it's a public that appreciates and encourages writers at all stages of their craft. Will readers and writers give their attention to *The Write Chat*? So far, the answer seems to be yes. Will schools and classrooms do that too?

What Might this Have to do With Writing in Schools?

As we plan for future literacy education, what might we learn from TKRB? Here are a few points for further consideration:

1. Workflow is an essential thing to know and teach about writing. Managing opportunities and time was not just something Erik had to learn about. It was also something both kids and authors I interviewed ubiquitously struggled with as they worked to deliver more new releases and to keep up the rhythm of response to other people's new releases. A public presence was something that all the authors I interviewed recognized as a necessary part of their work and something they struggled to balance with their writing lives and family lives. Notably, too, Erik's blog posts were what got the most attention through TKRB—not his other kinds of writing, like his novel, short stories, or picture books, although he was constantly working on writing like that. They just weren't the centerpieces of this networked public. Other young authors I interviewed who'd done indie books had seen them lead to opportunities to do what the indie authors Erik reviewed were doing: interviews, and blog tours, and Kickstarters (online fundraisers) to get money to make better covers, etc. The lesson for kids was summed up well by one Cool

Mom: ″Felicia knows already that writing is one thing. Being an author, where you have your book out there, is totally different!″ (Cool Mom, Interview, 7-3-14). What kids and indie writers wanted help with was not only understanding how to do the new work of building an audience and marketing their books, but help with managing the constant bids for their attention.

If we can expect that much more of authors' time now must be devoted to interacting with readers, then in our classrooms we can open up conversations about how to manage the workflow of writing between writing our own stuff and reading other people's stuff. We might do what Erik's parents did: teach young writers how to keep their calendars and adjust them to better suite their needs; and to be cognizant of the balance of time they spend on their own writing and other people's writing. We might also teach them that authors welcome opportunities, but also sometimes reject opportunities in order to maintain the quality of their own work. One young book blogger and author wondered if this pressure of responding to other writers wasn't detrimental to this generation of literature all together:

> A lot of authors are constantly trying to promote their stuff and everything, which I think has led to the quality of stuff going down….I think that a lot of books that were being written, like a hundred years ago, were a lot better than the books that are being written today. But they are a lot of fun, the books that are being written now. But I'm not aware of any writers that are going to be known like the great classic writers. (Teen Blogger, Interview, 8-28-14)

This brings us to a second take-away point for educators.

2. Question what counts as quality. Notably, Erik's reading diet was omnivorous between traditionally-published and indie books. He didn't attach any preconceived stigma to indie books: "I think self-published books are a great way to get your book out there. I read a lot of self-published books where I think the book is as good, if not better, than the traditionally published ones I read." (Erik, Interview by LaNeve 2013). Perhaps this is because he is growing up at a time when self-publishing is becoming more commonplace. But for educators in other generations, and even the teen writer quoted above, it is likely that we still carry judgments about indies and weigh them against the kind of traditionally-published standards we associate with classics. In our professional literatures, our libraries, and classrooms, "high quality" literature generally refers to a class of books that are carefully-edited, bound, marketed by major publishing houses, and favorably-reviewed by professionals. But what else might be "high-quality" literature? We've perhaps not even noticed what's missing from our library shelves. One indie author pointed out to me, teachers won't find indie authors at major literacy teacher conventions selling books, because they aren't allowed. Nor will they find them in the major publications that review books for schools and libraries, because they aren't allowed there either. Meanwhile, indie authors who take their work very seriously and hope to extend into schools are banding together to try and build trust and standards—getting professional copy-editing and hiring designers to improve their book covers, etc. Many produce teaching materials intended to be sold with their books, and offer free e-copies to classrooms, as well as invitations to have interviews with classrooms.

These kinds of things were happening with the indie authors I spoke to, but this may or may not be a wider trend. Nonetheless, if we take a cue from Erik that quality is located in a diverse selection of authors and books, and that quality isn't synonymous with a brand name, or editing, or binding, then we might need to think more with our students and for ourselves about questions like these: What counts as quality in books? For whom? Who is included in that definition? Who is excluded? Is that fair? Who does it serve? And how will we define quality—for ourselves and others—in the future of literacy? In abandoning his school's definition of worthwhile books (AR books), Erik's story invites us to reassess our own evaluations of the books we teach children to value in schools: Are we promoting a vision of publishing that is exclusive or inclusive? And whom does that serve?

Chapter 5: Matt's Bats

A bold red banner splashed across the top of the blog shows readers what Matt's Bats is all about. The banner reads: "Baseball Through the Eyes of an 11-Year-Old Kid." At both ends, it is emblazoned with signs of belonging: a star at the left signaling its elite status as a Major League Baseball (MLB) "Pro Blog" and a seal at the right signaling its loyalties to the Washington Nationals. "Follow me on Twitter @MattsBats," it reads, taking a swing at adding you to its list of over 1,400 subscribers on Twitter (Matt's Bats, n.d.-a).

In the following case study, I follow the lead of this banner to show how Matt's Bats got signed, sealed, and widely-delivered; that is, how it developed into a networked public performed by Matt's family, fans, baseball players, professional media, corporations, and publishers. To start, let's take a look at one of Matt's Bats blog posts selected from the end of its first year online. This exemplar serves as a representative of the broader findings in the case on distributions, circulations, and (de|re)stabilizations. It also offers a detailed account of how this networked public developed from early on. Matt writes about how his first year became one for the record books and was awarded the title of "MLB Pro Blog"—a status typically reserved for MLB staff and other baseball celebrities. It begins with Matt's Bats logo (Figure 5.1) and continues on Matt's own words to tell the story of how "Matt's Bats Turns 'Pro'"

Figure 5.1. Matt's Bats logo

"Matt's Bats Turns Pro"

Recently, MLB Advanced Media invited me to become a Pro Blogger on MLBlogs.com. That is the official blog website of Major League Baseball. So, after about 230 posts and more than 58,000 viewers, this will be my last post on the old Matt's Bats and my **first as a pro blogger for Major League Baseball** on my new Matt's Bats website…I want to thank MLB Advanced Media so much for giving me this opportunity to be a pro blogger with MLB. It's like my dream come true. I also want to thank the incredible Nats fans who read my blog and talk with me about baseball on Twitter. And finally I want to thank the people who helped me get this by editing my posts, allowing me to interview them, teaching me how to be a better writer and giving me good stories to write about.

For new readers, here's what you missed in the past year since I started writing my blog. Matt's Bats started with a post in July 2012 that covered the news of the day: the Hanley Ramirez trade from the Marlins to the Dodgers. Mainly I write about the Nationals, because they are my favorite team. Writing the blog makes me feel like a sportswriter, so I spend a lot of time writing posts and working with my parents to edit them to make them better. I go to a lot of Nats games, and I usually write about them after I go. Last year, I saw Nationals lefty pitcher Gio Gonzalez throw his first career complete game shutout against the Cardinals. I called the post "Gio Completo, Wain-o No Bueno."

In 2012, the Nats ended up having a MLB leading 98-64 record. They played the Saint Louis Cardinals in the NLDS. Game 4 was the thriller for the Nats, with Jayson Werth crushing a walkoff home run into the Cardinals bullpen. But the Nationals fell in game 5 with Drew Storen giving up 4 9th inning runs… I was recovering from the tough loss in January, when my Twitter exploded because a lot of Nats fans found me and started following and re-tweeting me. After I got off the school bus, my mom took a video of me when she was telling me that I went from about 30 Twitter followers to about 100. I was screaming loud enough for Nats Park to hear me!

I got a little bit famous. First, I was interviewed by a Nats blog called Red Porch Report. Then I made a few TV appearances. My first-ever TV appearance was on live TV with Dave Ross on Fox in DC. I have been interviewed by other bloggers like Meggie Zahneis for MLB.com and Matt Nadel on his blog Baseball With Matt. One of my readers made me a custom logo that I sometimes wear on a t-shirt. Even if I'm not wearing my Matt's Bats t-shirt, sometimes people still recognize me at the games!

Some other highlights of my year with Matt's Bats also include:

- Matt's Bats Chats with Heather Zimmerman (still my most popular post ever), Amanda Comak, Dave Jageler and a Washington Nationals Ballgirl. There are more coming soon too!
- Reporting from Nats Fest over the winter
- Watching live [Batting Practice] from the field before a Nats game
- Going from having 0 to about 700 Twitter followers, including baseball celebrities like Ian Desmond, Denard Span, Ryan Mattheus, Christian Garcia, Peter Gammons, F.P. Santangelo, Charlie Slowes and Dave Jageler.
- Meeting some of my readers and Twitter followers at parties and other events. The Archivists at TheNationalsArchive.com and the people from Half Street Irregulars have been the most encouraging and friendly to me.

Now, as a pro blogger for MLB, I hope I can continue to report on excellent stories about the Washington Nationals and other stories in baseball. Please let me know if you have ideas for stories or people you know who would like to be interviewed. Be sure to follow me on Twitter @MattsBats. THANKS EVERYBODY and remember to **IGNITE YOUR #MATTITUDE**. (Matt's Bats, 2013, August 26).

On Distribution

Tweeting Toward Translation

As is clear in "Matt's Bats Turns 'Pro,'" Twitter was a big deal to Matt's Bats' distribution. Recruiting baseball celebrities helped Matt's Bats find not just a real audience but also a really influential one. Notice Twitter references are made seven times in this short post. Matt writes about the Nats fans who "talk with me about baseball on Twitter;" meeting those Twitter followers "at parties and other events," including two fan groups on Twitter who "have been most encouraging and friendly to me." He celebrates the moment when his "Twitter exploded because a lot of Nats fans found me and started following and retweeting me." He attends to the numbers: the jump "from about 30 Twitter followers to about 100" and then later "about 700 followers" including a list of celebrity baseball players and broadcasters. And he reminds us all to subscribe: "Be sure to follow me on Twitter @MattsBats." In these references, we can see hints of how he used Twitter more broadly.

Unabashedly, Matt's Bats would target baseball celebrities as followers on Twitter. Though that might sound like a publicity stunt, it actually was a safety thing. As Matt's dad explained, the rule was that Matt was only allowed to follow public figures on Twitter—like players, broadcasters, and famous fans. So when he became "obsessed" with building his number of followers and the friends-and-family strategy was failing, Matt started tweeting baseball celebrities he followed and would say, "Hey, I just wrote about this" (Adam, Interview, 9-22-14).

When Matt got baseball celebrities to interact on Twitter, he would save images of those tweets and embed them on his blog—like when a Hall of Famer retweeted him or a famous baseball player's girlfriend. He also blogged a Twitter Wish List of the names of players and broadcasters he hoped would follow him, saying what he liked about each of them. It was typical for Matt to write about people by name, bold their names, promote them, and ask them to follow him. Many of them did follow him; and when they did, Matt blogged about that too:

> A few weeks ago, I wrote about the Top 10 people I wanted to follow me on Twitter, and Desmond, Slowes and Santangelo were all on the list and now, like Kevin Millar says, I "got heeem!" So I am going to keep writing my blog and making it better. Because now there are more than 200 people who follow Matt's Bats who are great fans of baseball and who are encouraging me. (Matt's Bats, 2013, January 23)

Among those who followed Matt was a well-connected persona known as Upside Down FP (an anonymous twitter account parodying Matt's favorite Nationals commentator, the real F.P. Santangelo). Impressed with Matt's writing and nostalgic for his youthful perspective on baseball, Upside Down FP tagged Matt with #FF (a Twitter hashtag for "Follow Friday" people use to recommend who others should follow) (Interview, 9-29-14). This #FF endorsement got the ball rolling for Matt's Bats and led to the sudden jump in almost 100 followers in one day among fans, including several who would later group together as the Nationals Archivists, and their group would encourage and support Matt's Bat for years to come. The important point is that from the very start Matt's Twitter friends were modeling the #FF; with this distribution strategy, they underscored the importance of getting readers to subscribe and the value of having well-connected Twitter friends as spokespersons.

Matt would continue to seek out players and broadcasters to follow him on Twitter, reaching online as well as at face-to-face events like NatsFest, the annual fan convention, approaching players with his requests and his Matt's Bats business cards. Though certainly a 'follow' wouldn't ensure anyone would actually read what Matt had to say, it made that possible. Further, it automated that possibility; it held the possibility of distribution open by delegating distribution to Twitter and its algorithm for delivering tweets. Each time Matt tweeted, by default it would be pushed to subscribers' Twitter Feeds. This was distribution by subscription—like how we subscribe to a newspaper and find it shows up on our porch every morning without our having to remember it. However distant or loose Matt's Twitter connections might have been, the subscription made getting their attention a possibility. That possibility was something Matt's Bats could write into a probability, as we'll see next.

Collecting Memorabilia: Genres of Appreciation

After finding a following on Twitter, Matt's Bats began to distribute new kinds of writing. In addition to posts in its standard commentary genre, featuring news and information about baseball, posts now routinely featured more relational genres showing Matt's new social connections. Table 5.1 shows a typology of Matt's Bats blog posts from 2013-2015 by genres: *experience narratives* from baseball-related events (17%), *interviews* of baseball-related insiders (10%), *promotions* of baseball-related products (8%), and *calls to participate* in baseball-related events (4%).

Table 5.1

Genres of Blog Posts by Matt's Bats (Over a Two-Year Period)

Month	Commentary	Experience	Interviews	Promotions	Invitations	Other	Total
2013-Apr	9	2	1	0	0	0	12
2013-May	8	2	1	1	0	0	12
2013-Jun	4	1	0	0	0	0	5
2013-Jul	6	1	1	1	1	0	10
2013-Aug	4	1	1	1	0	0	7
2013-Sept	7	2	1	0	0	0	10
2013-Oct	4	1	1	0	2	0	8
2013-Nov	2	3	0	0	0	0	5
2013-Dec	1	1	2	2	0	1	7
2014-Jan	0	2	2	1	0	0	5
2014-Feb	2	1	0	1	0	0	4
2014-Mar	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
2014-Apr	8	2	1	0	0	1	12
2014-May	7	0	0	0	0	1	8
2014-Jun	10	1	1	0	0	0	12
2014-Jul	2	2	1	0	0	0	5
2014-Aug	2	1	1	0	1	0	5
2014-Sept	4	0	0	2	1	0	7
2014-Oct	3	1	1	1	1	0	7
2014-Nov	2	2	0	3	0	0	7
2014-Dec	2	1	0	1	0	0	4
2015-Jan	4	0	2	0	0	0	6
2015-Feb	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
2015-Mar	2	2	0	0	0	1	5
Total #	102	30	18	14	6	4	174
Total %	59%	17%	10%	8%	4%	2%	100%

Collectively, I called these genres of appreciation. They were appreciations first in the sense of being expressions of enthusiasm and gratitude. Consistently, they celebrated the individuals and organizations that Matt looked up to and wanted to be associated with. Written with his signature positive "Mattitude," they detailed each encouraging interaction: How this player recognized him and said they read his blog, how welcoming this or that ballpark had been, how much he appreciated this or that media professional for their interest in him, etc. These genres were also appreciations in the sense that they showed how Matt's Bats was increasing in value—in terms of social capital, connected to important people, posing arm-in-arm with Matt, wearing Matt's Bats t-shirts, tweeting about him, etc. In these genres, Matt would turn small moments of interaction (online and off) with baseball celebrities into texts. That is, social interactions were delegated—turned into mobile, shareable digital artifacts that could be collected, archived, displayed, and curated for years to come.

To understand how Matt's Bats strategically distributed these artifacts, we can borrow a metaphor from one of Matt's Bats Twitter fans, Upside Down FP. As he explained to me, Matt's Bats is reminiscent of how we collected baseball cards as kids. Only instead of collecting paper cards with old stats, Matt is collecting baseball celebrities as friends through his Twitter and blog. And he's counting his own stats (in numbers of followers). And he's in the photo, too. For example, in the blog post above we can see Matt boasting about his number of followers as they increase. And with the posts Matt lists as "highlights" (NatsFest and Batting Practice), we see Matt all over the face of it: He's posing in pictures with baseball players and broadcasters and his Twitter fans; wearing his Matt's Bats t-shirt; and even embedding artifacts of his Twitter interactions with those people. Like cards, these relational blog posts were memorabilia—artifacts Matt's Bats could keep on the shelf for show and then take down sometimes to be played with, much to the enjoyment of Matt's friends. Matt's Bats played these kinds of relational cards often.

As shown in Table 5.1, relational genres were played alongside informational baseball commentary, both shown repeatedly month after month. As we've seen, Matt's Bats sometimes created retrospective posts that selectively displayed old posts (and linked to them) to show Matt's Bats history and trajectory. By playing both kinds of cards, Matt's Bats made a bid to translate fans of baseball into fans of Matt's Bats: as a subscriber, to take one card, you'd have to take the other. These relational blog posts were also commonly sorted and re-sorted like cards, curated into different displays over time. In the next section, we'll take a closer look at how Matt's Bats played these cards (genres) together.

Mobilizing Memorabilia

"My Experience Watching BP [Batting Practice] from the Field" is a typical experience narrative for Matt's Bats (Matt' Bats, 2013, April 24). Matt reports from behind-the-scenes, featuring small moments: meeting and greeting baseball celebrities. The name of each person is written in bold letters for emphasis. He shows and tells us about each interaction. For example, saying hi to **Ian Desmond**: "He said, 'Hey Matt's Bats!" I said thanks for wearing my shirt on TV. He said "it's a pleasure." He shows us a photo of that time, and Ian being interviewed on TV in the shirt. And photos of Matt getting autographs from players, like **Steve Lombardozzi**, who he leads into conversation through a Twitter connection:

> I told Lombo that I am friends with his girlfriend Brooke on Twitter. He said, 'Aren't you a little young to be tweeting to Brooke?' It's true that I am young to be on Twitter, but I only go on with my parents watching. (Matt' Bats, 2013, April 24)

We also see Matt posing in photos with several professional broadcasters, including some of the favorites he's wanted to meet: National color commentator **F.P Santangelo**, a Matt's Bats reader, and Nationals radio broadcaster, **Dave Jageler**, who would soon become a Matt's Bats reader, too.

The following blog post also shows how Matt could turn a momentary face-to-face interaction into more extended relationships through social media. Dave was a broadcaster whose radio calls Matt loved to listen to. Matt identified Dave at batting practice, posed for a photo arm-in-arm in his Matt's Bats t-shirt, and told Dave about his Twitter and blog. Later, Matt sought out Dave on Twitter, tagged him in the photo, and recommended him to Matt's Bats followers on Twitter:

I met **Dave Jageler**, too. I told him about my blog and that I am on Twitter. He took out his iPhone and said he would follow me on Twitter. I didn't know that he had Twitter, but I followed him back. He only had 13 followers then, but later I sent out a tweet that people should #FF him.

Figure 5.2. Tweet from @MattsBats to @DaveJageler. (in Matts Bat's, 2013, April 24)

In this example, we see Matt doing what his Nationals Archivist and other fan friends had modeled for him: showing Dave that if you connect to someone else who is well-connected on Twitter, they can help you secure subscriptions (through #FF, Follow Friday). Matt then blogged about their interaction, showing both Matt's tweet and Dave's encouraging response (Figure 5.3), with an explanation of what had happened to his readers:

> He tweeted back to me. Then lots of people started following him. Now he has over **500** followers! <u>I bet he freaked out the same way I did when Fake FP #FF'd me</u>. (Matt's Bats, 2013, April 24)

Figure 5.3. Tweet from @DaveJageler to @MattsBats. (In Matts Bat's, 2013, April 24)

Here, we see typical re-distribution strategies of Matt's Bats: lifting artifacts of interaction and mobilizing them between Twitter and blog—again, playing them like cards in a collection, curated for friends.

Artifacted as such, Matt's Bats could then play these cards through time. Just a few months later, there was a Matt's Bats Chat with Dave Jageler. The interview genre would allow Matt to get to know Dave more personally. Appreciating Dave's craft, he'd also tuck in Dave's appreciation of Matt—showing Dave's earlier tweet about Matt alongside Dave's thanks to Matt for apprenticing him to social media: "I refuse to go on Facebook and I am stunned that I am on Twitter but thanks to you I have a decent number of followers!" Calling up those past tweets, Matt would explain:

> Dave is talking about the time in April when I talked with him on the field before a game. He had a bunch of Twitter followers, but not a lot. I took a picture with him and then tweeted it out and all of the sudden he had like 300! (Matt's Bats, 2013, July 15)

Matt would keep up that connection by reaching out to Dave in person at events and thank Dave publicly on the blog "for always encouraging me" (Matt's Bats, 2015, April 24). About a year later, Matt would tap Dave again—this time for a behind-the-scenes experience post "Up in the Booth: How does a Baseball Radio Broadcast Happen?" (Matt's Bats, 2014, June 16). Here, Matt interviewed Dave about what goes into calling a game, linked back to his Matt's Bats chat with Dave, and embedded Dave's encouraging Tweet again.

Returning to our metaphor, we can see here how Matt was collecting more and more cards of/with Dave to play and how he spread those cards out. Elsewhere, he stacked them, too. For example, on his bio page "About Matt's Bat" (Matt's Bats, n.d.-b), Matt's credentials are distilled into a single blog post that include a slideshow of Matt's photos with baseball insiders collected form his blog and a list of names of people Matt has interviewed. Included in the pack (of cards) is Dave Jageler. In ANT-ish terms, this bio page's consolidated collection is a deflation (Latour, 1986b)—a whittling down of more and more things into a more compact, representative text. And the slideshow is an immutable mobile (Latour, 1986b), a spokesthing for Matt's Bats relations, quick and easy for others to take up.

What Might This Have To Do With Writing In Schools?

These distribution strategies made Matt's Bats "a little famous," but that wasn't the point of its summoning a readership. The goal of Matt's Bats' translation was educational; it was to give Matt the opportunity to practice writing. In Matt's words, "This is not about publicity, it's about challenging myself to keep doing better and having fun while doing it" (Matt, Interview, by Zahneis, 2013). Matt's Bats recruited readers he admired, and they motivated him to keep writing better and better. As literacy educators with similar goals, we might explore digital distribution in order to give more young writers motivational and meaningful opportunities to practice writing. Distribution strategies from Matt's Bats suggest a few things we might consider in our schools with networked writing.

1. Showing up to bat every day. Like the players he admired so much, Matt showed up regularly to work on his craft. “Don’t just say, ‘I’m going to start a blog and I’m going to become famous. Just don’t say that,” Matt advised me. “Just because you’re starting a blog doesn’t mean the next night you’re going to be the most famous person in the world. It takes a lot of practice“ (Interview, 9-27-14). Indeed, Matt did a great deal of writing—about seven posts per month; and he did this routinely, month-after-month, staying with it steadily and building a following (see Table 5.1). Matt also took pride in editing carefully with his parents to make sure posts were of high quality. “Everybody is going to be able to access it. So it’s got to be your best work,” he explained; “I just try to be like a really professional writer” (Interview, 9-27-14). Like a professional writer, Matt also valued his editors. His parents, the “Editors-in-Chief” of Matt’s Bats helped him edit everything to be sure it was “on point” (Amy, Interview, 11-4-14). They also helped him to extend his practice sites, moving to Twitter in order to draw attention back to the blog.

As literacy educators, we might consider similar work to support young writers in schools. That is, we might serve as children’s editors, working side-by-side to extend their work into public view on to social media platform(s) with our careful, thoughtful support. Further, we might offer sustained opportunities to practice—writing frequently and consistently over time. In this case, subscription and routine, focused delivery of content allowed relations to develop of time. It seems unlikely that this opportunity would be afforded by social media units of study that are isolated in a single ‘unit of study’ in a classroom. Showing up repeatedly to write makes it more likely that readers will show up repeatedly to write back.

2. Making it good. Matt identified January 2013 as the time when as a writer he “started to really turn on [his] good work” (Interview, 9-27-14). Analysis showed that this was when Matt's Bats began extending beyond basic commentary posts into *genres of appreciation* that allowed him to build relations with well-connected others and to display them on social media over time. Both Matt's blog posts and his interview showed that he implicitly understood that these relational approaches were what made his posts get "good." For example, he identified his favorite post ever as Heather Zimmerman's interview, and explained that its importance was in its genre (his first interview), its subject (a famous player's wife), its interest to his readers (they really wanted to know about her), and its getting lots of views (his most ever up to that point) (Interview, Matt, 9-27-14). As such, Matt was learning that the quality of his writing was building relationships in social media—delivering relations with baseball insiders routinely to the subscribers who would be interested in that. In fact, this quality of Matt's writing was what others expressed was so interesting to them about Matt's Bats (Upside Down FP, Interview, 9-29-14; Allan Peterson, Interview, 10-1-14; Jeff Zullo, Interview, 10-28-14).

As literacy educators, Matt's Bats' case might invite us to think how to provide opportunities for young writers to do authentically "good" writing in social media. If "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 9), how can we invite them to use social media platforms authentically, like building relations from loose ties that can serve as encouragement and resources? Just as Matt understood the value of different genres, we might assess the variety of genres our students are writing or blogging online as schoolwork. Are we asking them to publish perfunctory commentary 'in public', vs. showing them how to 'be public' by reaching out to learn from important people and communities of readers in the world? (See Boyd, 2014 for this distinction between being and doing publicness; also, see Chapter 2). We might also assess Web 2.0 writing like Matt, by thinking with students about the number of views some pieces receive compared to others and building inquiry into the features of "good writing" to inform our writing.

3. Talking and relating as equals. Perhaps the most surprising finding in terms of Matt's Bats distribution is how brave Matt was in approaching the people he admired—setting his sights very high in terms of the readership he wanted to find and keep. In fact, it was this bold approach that baseball insiders appreciated about him:

> [Matt] seemed to have no fear or hesitation in coming up and engaging in a conversation. And a lot of kids that age… they get nervous and clam up. He wasn't like that. He had a certain confidence… If he wants to do this going forward [as a journalist], that's a very important skill to have: To not have the hero worship complex in the media, to be able to talk to and relate to athletes as equals rather than being intimidated by going into a major league clubhouse… So at least that initial skill set, the ability to converse, would put him in that direction. And that's why I took a little bit of an interest in him. (Interview, Dave Jageler, 10-24-14)

The importance of ability to converse was seconded by the social media manager whose happenstance referral to Matt's Bats landed him a position as a Pro Blogger at MLB.com:

> It is very rare that somebody just happens to stumble on what you are doing and see who you are and pick you out of another million people who are doing the same thing…Networking is extremely important… As long as you are willing to go and try to make that introduction, to try to get yourself recognized in some way, it's really a head-start and it really puts you at a great advantage. (Jeff Zullo, Interview, 10-28-14)

This confidence in networking was a commonality across all five of the young baseball bloggers (ages 10-16) who were interviewed in this case. For example, one boy recruited me to interview him; after I started following his blog, he looked me up on Twitter, saw that other well-connected baseball kid bloggers were tweeting about my interviews, so he invited me to learn more about him, too (I happily took him up on it). Over time, I found the baseball blogger kids recruited me as much as I recruited them: tagging me on Twitter and directly messaging me with greetings, holiday wishes, and requests for advice or materials even months after our interview. As such, I experienced how they went about turning a distant contact like me into a person who was an ongoing reader and an available source of support.

To those of us who grew up in a pre-digital era, this kind of reaching out to influential contacts or even public figures might sound improbable, or even improper. Even to Matt's mom, Matt's interaction with these baseball celebrities was "mind boggling." As a child, she'd viewed athletes as being "way up here in the stratosphere;" but now "what social media has done is lower the bar" (Amy, Interview, 11-4-14). For her son Matt, she explains, these athletes are within reach. He looks up to them, but "they are now attainable. They are like close enough you could interact with them… And that's a mindset he has, that I certainly never had and I still don't really have."

As literacy educators, it may be worthwhile to examine our mindsets with respect to attainability, and how that shapes the audiences we choose (or don't choose) for young writers in schools. Do we believe, like Matt, that our classes could summon powerful others as sources of encouragement? How might we use social media to enroll public figures or other attainable others as readers for our classrooms? To some, it might seem far-fetched that a broader audience would really be interested in a child's writing. However, Matt's Bats suggests we might challenge this idea as something left over from our own print-era childhoods. As we'll see in the next section, when Matt's Bats reached out, a world of powerful others reached.

On Circulation

Matt's Bats started as a blog that interested a little kid and his parents. Over time, it became a networked public that interested tens of thousands of readers. Analysis of how Matt's Bats achieved such circulation revealed that two groups of readers were especially interested in Matt's Bats' advancement: baseball business insiders and baseball fans on Twitter. Turning again to "Matt's Bats Turns 'Pro,'" we can see Matt identified these groups even from early on in Matt's Bats' history, expressing his gratitude for their instrumentality in his success:

> Recently, MLB Advanced Media invited me to become a Pro Blogger on MLBlogs.com. That is the official blog website of Major League Baseball…I want to thank MLB Advanced Media so much for giving me this opportunity to be a pro blogger with MLB. It's like my dream come true. I also want to thank the incredible Nats fans who read my blog and talk with me about baseball on Twitter. And finally I want to thank the people who helped me get this by editing my posts, allowing me to interview them, teaching me how to be a better writer and giving me good stories to write about. (Matt's Bats, 2013, August 26)

Indeed, year after year, the Twitter fans would faithfully follow Matt's Bats, and baseball industry insiders would reliably give him content to write about. As would be predicted by ANT's notion of translation (e.g., Callon, 1986), I found that they did so because they shared a common goal with Matt's Bats. And as would be predicted by Warner's (2002) notion of publics, these goals involved getting and keeping the attention of an ever-increasing number and diversity of followers.

To make it more immediately clear who these players were and how they worked together, another baseball analogy is helpful. Like a baseball team might, Matt's Bats seemed to be winning season after season based on its strength in recruiting two different kinds of players on its roster. The first kind was the all-around, reliable, local fan favorite players—contact hitters who consistently kept the ball in play; for Matt's Bats, these were the Twitter fans, the Nationals Archivists. The second kind was power hitters, who were known for driving the ball, hitting home runs or extra-base hits. These were the baseball insiders, professionals in media with expertise in broadcasting, public relations, and marketing.

Together, these two kinds of players would keep the attention of the fans on the field (or generate internet traffic) and keep the momentum going toward home plate (their websites and social media). Then runs could be counted up (in traffic analytics) and translated into things like cheers (promotions), wins (opportunities), and ticket sales (revenue or charitable donations). Though the different players might come from different backgrounds (perspectives) or use different techniques (methods of delivery), they were all playing to win fans (e.g., followers, readers, and customers) and kept fans showing up in the stands (e.g., following, reading, participating, and spending). As such, they played with Matt's Bats: letting him bat for them (interviewing and promoting them), and they'd go to bat for him (spreading the word about Matt's Bats). By playing together, they all stood to win.

To see how they actually played, my analysis looked at the genres they routinely performed with Matt's Bats. There were three of them: *follows*, *interviews*, and *promotions*. As I found, these genres served the interests of all involved. Again, these were *genres of appreciation* in both senses of that word: appreciation as in positive recognition or approval and appreciation as in raising the social or economic capital. These genres made Matt's writing very attractive to a lot of people, especially those who were experts in distribution and understood the value of Matt's always positive perspective: Twitter celebrities, media people, public relations, marketers, and publishers. Below, I'll discuss the two main groups of these delivery experts and the genres in which they performed Matt's Bats. These were baseball fans on Twitter (via subscriptions or follows on Twitter) and baseball industry insiders (via interviews). Later [On (De|Re)Stabilization, I'll discuss a third genre that baseball industry insiders circulated with Matt's Bats: promotions.

Recruiting Team @MattsBats: Twitter Fans and Followers

Matt gave his Twitter fans a lot of credit for Matt's Bats' circulation. Analysis led me to do the same. From Matt's Bats' thousands of followers, I selected some fans to learn about how Matt's Bats spread, drawing from those Matt recognized as having been "the most encouraging and friendly" to him: members of The Nationals Archive. As I learned from three Archivists, supporting Matt's Bats was fun and easy for them to do. It was a project that aligned with their goals—having fun and doing social good as a fan community. A bit of backstory is helpful to understanding why and how The Archivists mobilized Matt's Bats.

The Nationals Archivists. At its core, The Nationals Archive was made up of ten men and women who were fans of the Washington Nationals baseball team. Though living in different states, they became "a close-knit community" on Twitter. Mainly, they would create and share Nationals humor; like Matt, their goal was mostly to have fun (Upside Down FP, Interview, 9-29-14). One anonymous Archivist on Twitter called Jayson Werth's Beard had to explain the situation to me by email, not Skype, because no one knows who the beard really is; the hilarious Twitter account is anonymous and stays in character as it tweets from the perspective of a popular National's player's fulsome beard. As the Beard told me, the point was to be "fun" and "light-hearted" and "positive"— a counter-point to the side of the fan base that focused on the "negative" or "doom and gloom" (Interview, 10-20-14). The Archivists appreciated Matt's "hilarious" posts (Upside Down FP, Interview, 9-29-14). Also like Matt, they celebrated relationships. Their mission involved building relations among fans, and between players and fans (Allan Peterson, Interview, 10-1-14). They appreciated the new "sense of community" that social media afforded them for interacting, even from states apart, and the "real life friendships" that could come out of them (Jayson Werth's Beard, Interview, 10-20-14). They were "fan ambassadors" (Upside Down FP, Interview, 9-29-14).

They saw relations with baseball celebrities as something attainable and something they could use to do big things. These relations brought with them a new perspective on fandom for Archivists like Allan Peterson: rather than just getting the rush of seeing players on the field and collecting their cards, the rush came with approaching players as collaborators, asking things like "Hey, how can we help you? How can we use this relationship to raise more money for charity?" (Interview, 10-1-14). For example, the Archivists collaborated with one popular Washington Nationals player to help raise money for medical research on neurofibromatosis, a disease the player had learned about through one of his young Twitter fans who was fighting it. Under the banner #EndNF (#EndNeurofibromatisis), they helped publicize the project through blogs and Twitter. Matt's Bats lent supported the grassroots internet campaign by posting an interview with an Archivist who was helping to organize it. In the end, they raised $10,000 in five days (Allan Peterson, Interview, 10-1-14).

To these ends—building relations and social good—the Archivists brought skills and strategies. They were professionals in areas like creative media design, public relations, marketing, and web development. They connected on Twitter with each other. Eventually, they collected their creative work in one place, and gave it a name and logo—The Nationals Archive. Through an inside connection, they were able to get their parodies of the team and players seen in the Nationals clubhouse. Players then began to recognize them as a group, interact with them on Twitter, and even wear t-shirts with the Archivists' funny graphics on them. The Archivist would also sell these funny t-shirts to Nationals fans to raise money for players' charities. The Archivists would use familiar strategies to put @MattsBats in play: the Twitter connections, the relations with players, the logo and t-shirt to represent their archive, and the goal of supporting others through charitable work.

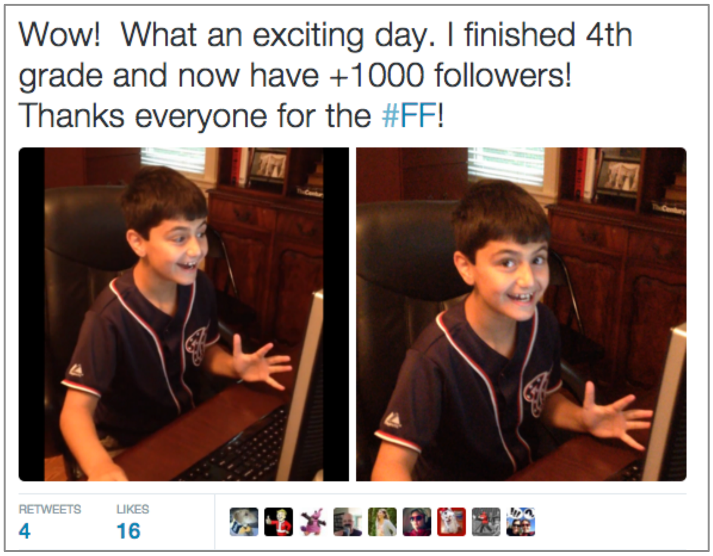
Returning to "Matt's Bats Turns 'Pro,'" we can see hints of some main ways Twitter fans spread the word: by retweeting, recommending (#FF-ing), reinscribing (logo-ing) @MattsBats, and fundraising. These resulted in ever-increasing numbers of followers and the mobilization of many toward the goals they shared in common with Matt's Bats.

Retweeting. The most common way they circulated @MattsBats was by retweeting—that is, writing short, informal bits of texts in conversation with each other on Twitter. Matt signals this kind of circulation in his blog post when he thanks "the incredible Nationals fans who read my blog and talk with me about baseball on Twitter" (Matt's Bats, 2013, August 26). Indeed, though the Matt's main content was on his blog, Twitter was where readers responded and circulated Matt's content. On an everyday or semi-weekly basis, followers would retweet @MattsBats post or reply to @MattsBats in their baseball talk on Twitter. As one Archivist explained, "Everybody who I know who follows him just loves it, and retweets everything he says. And when he posts an article, I link to it too. Because they're hilarious. And they're great" (Upside Down FP, Interview, 9-29-14). By default, these kind of retweets and links would circulate @MattsBats to these readers' Twitter followers—and that was a pretty big audience because individually they each had thousands and even tens of thousands of followers.

Recommending (#FF-ing). In addition to these everyday circulations, these Twitter fans would occasionally recruit new followers en masse to @MattsBats. Matt signals how important this was when he recalls the moment: "My Twitter exploded because a lot of Nats fans found me and started following and re-tweeting me," and he arrived home from school to find he'd jumped from about 30 to 100 followers: "I was screaming loud enough for Nats Park to hear me!" (Matt's Bats, 2013, August 26). In this moment, the people who would become Matt's Bats "most encouraging and friendly" supporters had teamed up and pushed Matt to his goal of 100 followers in just one day, and while Matt was away at school.

They'd do similar things for years to come—like getting @MattsBats up to 1000 followers or retweet en masse to nominate him to Sporting News' "Must-Follow Twitter List" for the 2014 playoff season. Kind of like PBS TV membership drives, for a brief period they'd push for new followers of @Matts Bats. Often, this was with the hashtag #FollowFriday (or #FF), a familiar Twitter signal meaning they endorsed Matt to their own followers, and encouraged them to also subscribe. For example, one Nats Archivist would tweet: "#FF the future of MLB reporting, kid blogging superstar @MattsBats. He's close to 1,000 follows, get him there today" (Allan, 2014). Another would tweet with the hashtag #OperationGetMattTo1000 (Upside Down FP, 2014, March 28). When they failed to reach that goal initially, an anonymous Archivist known as Jayson Werth's Beard would alert his 13,000 Twitter followers on Matt's behalf: "Get with it, twitter! … #FF How does @MattsBats not have 1,000 followers yet? Best Nats blog out there. You won't regret it" (Jayson Werth's Beard, 2014). This was important, as they knew that "the more followers he has, the more readers he's assured" (Upside Down FP, Interview, 9-29-14). Sure enough, they did get Matt there, much to his delight (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4. Matt's response to getting 1,000 Twitter followers. (Matt's Bats, 2014, June 13)



Recalling Marshall McLuhan's (1964) notion that "the medium is the message," the message of the subscription was ongoing contact (p. 9). As I observed, relations generated through those #FF pushes allowed Twitter fans to stay in touch with what @MattsBats was up to over time. For example, soon after these follows, Matt would meet Twitter followers, including The Archivists and Ian Desmond in person at NatsFest, extending their relationships from Twitter connections to face-to-face. Then over time, they'd continue to tweet to Matt in support of his activities. Ian Desmond would #FF on Twitter to recommend Matt to famous sportswriters and major sports networks; and then they, too, would become followers of Matt's Bats. And when Matt tweeted Ian that he was going to be interviewed on live TV, the famously kind player tweeted back his encouragement. In general, this is how it worked: Matt would post tweet about his milestones, and his new friends would tweet back with an abundance of encouragement.

Reinscribing: Logo-ing, t-shirt-ing and hashtag-ing. Finally, Twitter fans also helped Matt's Bats circulate by making it a 'thing' that was easy to follow. Figure

5.1 shows Matt's custom logo (a bat and bases), made by one of Matt's readers, a Nationals Archivist. Matt's logo was also stamped across Matt's social media platforms as his avatar and signature. It was also something that could become mobile off screen. It helped people recognize him at games. His Matt's Bats t-shirt was featured in the photos he took for blog posts (e.g., see Figure 5.2 above). It was also something others people wore—like one Nationals Archivists who wore the shirt to spring training in Florida, taking photos with it to show Matt's reach (even though he couldn't be there in person); the Archivist was delighted that someone else who knew Matt approached him there in Florida because she recognized the logo (Upside Down FP, Interview, 9-29-14). One of Matt's favorite Nationals players wore the shirt on a television interview—a moment Matt's Bats archived and redistributed.

Also, collaborating with Archivist Upside Down FP on PhotoShop, Matt would create funny hashtags with graphics to announce them for Nationals fans on Twitter to use to discuss different series (e.g., #ShredTheReds). These were bids for circulation, that might even have been take up by big media broadcasters: "I think I saw @Masnsports use my hashtag on TV again!" (Matt's Bats, 2015, July 6). Hashtags were texts that attempted to bring Nationals fans into conversation under one banner, tied to @MattsBats. They'd also come together offline, literally under that banner of Matt's Bats, as the next section on fundraisers will show.

Fundraising. In addition to these ways of socially appreciating Matt's Bats, the Archivists would help Matt's Bats to appreciate economic value through fundraising for charities. Matt would interview Allan Peterson to help spread the word for a charity fundraiser that he was helping Nationals Player Ian Desmond organize (#EndNF, see above). Nationals Archivists would also respond to Matt's tagging them to join in making a funny video (pouring ice on their heads) for the "Ice Bucket Challenge" to benefit research on Lou Gehrig's disease. Taking a page from the National Archivists playbook, Matt would also recruit his readers to support a charity that was important to his family, Breathe Deep DC, a lung cancer benefit and walk they did each year. In response to Matt's efforts to raise funds through his Twitter and blog, his readers would tweet and retweet, bringing in dozens of contributors. Matt's mom explained their response to Matt:

> The response Matt got on Twitter was amazing. I mean, it made me speechless, in terms of the dollars that people committed. The team that he assembled. I mean the people who came to walk with us were just Twitter followers. You know, again, like this group of people you said is more like a family. They really rallied behind him and supported him. … He raised something like $11,000. He was one of the top fundraisers for the charity. And they were so wonderful. And the Nationals gave him this bat too, you know, which was amazing. And I think I keep saying 'Amazing.' Sorry, but it just is. (Amy, Interview, 11-4-14)

This groundswell of fan participation also caught the attention of the Nationals organization. At the Breathe Deep DC event, Matt received a bat from the Nationals—a collectible, signed by one of his favorite players and delivered on a grand stage at the DC mall in front of a live audience. His fans would archive the moment in tweets and photos (see for example Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5. Matt on stage being awarded a signed bat at a fundraiser. Photo by @AshburnNatsFans. (Matt's Bats, 2013, November 4)

In this way, the team's recognition of Matt could be made visible and shareable—showing that relations between players and fans could be used for fun and for social good. And this, again, was befitting the mission statement of fan groups like the Nationals Archivists. By publicly appreciating Matt's Bats' fundraising—and building of relations more generally—they could essentially promote the kind of entertaining, collaborative, socially-good fandom the industry wanted to recognize and support: "He represents the future. Baseball would be good to support him." (Allan Peterson, Interview, 10-1-14). As it turned out, the baseball industry would support Matt's Bats. The next sections show how and why they, too, appreciated Matt's Bats.

Driving Home Runs: Media and Corporate Power Hitters

Right after its burst of popularity among Nationals fans on Twitter, media and businesses began to take up Matt's Bats, too. Recall from the excerpt "Matt's Bats Turns Pro" how Matt writes about being interviewed on the local news, on

MLB.com, and by other baseball bloggers; and then having highlights of his current year include doing Matt's Bats Chats interviews of famous people related to the Nationals, with the intention of doing more: "Please let me know if you have ideas for stories or people you know who would like to be interviewed. Be sure to follow me on Twitter @MattsBats. THANKS EVERYBODY and remember to **IGNITE YOUR #MATTITUDE**." (Matt's Bats, 2013, August 26)

As suggested in this excerpt, an important part of Matt's Bats circulation was that media people interviewed Matt, let him interview them, and tweeted about all these interviews. They were media people of different types, like those Matt writes about here: bloggers, radio and TV broadcasters, newspaper journalists, and kid sportswriters. In addition, big companies like MLB would ask or agree for Matt's Bats to promote them, by endorsing their products or by writing for their major media platforms online. In the next sections, a closer look at these two genres of interaction—interviews and promotions—will illustrate who got interested in them, and how they worked as genres of appreciation, reflecting positively on others, while also increasingly social or economic value.

Interviews. Even from early on, Matt associated interviews with his past and future success—as evidenced in Matt's Bats Turns Pro as he lists his interviews. He thanked these people for "allowing me to interview them, teaching me how to be a better writer and giving me good stories to write about," and asked readers to recommend "people you know who would like to be interviewed" (Matt's Bats, 2013, August 26). He understood the interviews as something other people wanted to do—not just for him, but also for themselves. Matt got this idea after being interviewed early on by another Nationals blogger and on the local news by a sport reporter. These generated attention in social media from new readers as well as Matt's heroes, like his favorite player and the broadcaster. These experiences led him to start an ongoing series of blog posts called Matt's Bats Chats (Matt, Interview, 9-27-14). According to Matt, interviews made great posts because they were nice and easy; that is, "They're nice ways to get to know some people… They're also very easy to write" (Interview, 9-27-14). This seemed likely to be equally true for those interviewed: they are a nice way to get known, and easy to do.

This is how a typical Matt's Bats Chat would go. The famous person would answer Matt's questions at events in person, or by phone, or (most often) by email. Then, they'd answer Matt's pre-prepared questions about their personal history in baseball and the details of their professional work in baseball now—which was usually broadcasting or sports writing. For example, he'd ask Dave Jageler, the Voice of the Nationals for MASN radio, questions like: "How did you get into broadcasting? Did you know what you wanted to be when you were my age? How do you describe the job of a radio broadcaster? What is a typical day like for you?" (Matt's Bats, 2013, July 15).

Then, Matt would assemble a Matt's Bats Chats blog post: here, he'd turn the interview into a question-and-answer (Q&A) format transcript, and add attractive photos of the person working hard, or sometimes smiling with Matt (e.g., Figure 5.5). Then, he'd write around the interview—adding an introduction and sometimes comments—all in his typically enthusiastic register. For example, "I love the way Dave described the role of a broadcaster. I never thought about some of those things before." Or, "Now [Dave] has over 2,000 [Twitter followers], which is a lot more than I have—about 1,500 more!" (Matt's Bats, 2013, July 15). Matt would conclude with an expression of thanks and often a final celebration and referral of his readers to his interviewee's websites or social media:

- I had such a great time talking with my friend Matt Nadel from Baseball with Matt. Make sure you follow Matt on **Twitter at @BaseballwMatt**! You definitely need to watch the **video** of him on Hot Stove at because he was excellent! (Matt's Bats, 2013, March 11)

- It was so fun interviewing Amanda **because she is amazing at doing her job**. She creates amazing articles. If you do not read them already, click HERE for the Washington Times page and follow her on Twitter @AComak. (Matt's Bats, 2013, April 3)

The completed Matt's Bats Chats were then packaged in a blog post, and distributed to Matt's Bats blog, added to the running list of Matt's Bats Chats, and linked to within future Matt's Bats Chats that would recall the previous ones. As such, these brief interactions became durable, spreadable digital objects. As immutable mobiles (Latour, 1986b), they could travel quickly and easily through Twitter, by links from Matt's and his followers, his interviewees and their followers, and their followers' followers. In this way, the interviews could recruit more and more people to share Matt's good news. By doing the Matt's Bats Chats and supporting Matt's Bats in becoming more visible, interviewees also stood to gain positive publicity and, ultimately, more followers for themselves.

As such, these were distinctive kinds of performances of the interview genre—not interviewing to assess, or to document, or to probe, as we might expect from a job interviewer, or a historian, or an investigative journalist. They were interviews to relate positively to others. The positivity was their key point. In fact, all seven of the adults I interviewed about Matt's Bats brought up his positivity. Dave Jageler, the radio "Voice of the Nationals," suggested this was the essential thing that made Matt's Bats stand out as special and important to people: Matt was the "opposite" of the usual "negative" culture of sports talk:

> So the Nationals won the division - so they lost the playoff, they won the division. The adult might say, 'Boy, we really blew that and should have won.' But he looks at it from a child's perspective, which probably for the majority of his readers, they can't get that in other places." (Interview, 10-

24-14)

Positivity was a signature for Matt's Bats—literally, the closing signature of each blog post: "Remember to IGNITE YOUR #MATTITUDE." It was a play on the Nationals team slogan, "Ignite your Natitude." To Matt, it meant "cheering on your team, staying positive… not focusing on the bad results as much as the good performances" (Matt's Bats, 2013, August 2). It was something his editors-in-chief (his parents) encouraged. From early on, they taught Matt that if he had a negative opinion, he'd need to frame it graciously and constructively. This was one way his parents protected him online, by teaching him to avoid negative publicity. "You'll see on Matt's site, no matter what the topic, it's almost uniformly positive," Adam explained, "Like it is a good PR piece for anybody" (Interview, 9-22-14).

In fact, Matt's Bats Chats proved to be enduringly attractive. First to respond were other high-profile kid baseball bloggers. Soon, local celebrities associated with the Nationals would agree, too: a popular player's wife on Twitter, a popular newspaper sports reporter, the Nationals radio broadcaster, and a National ball girl. "They retweeted [the interviews] and it just sort of built from there," Matt's mom explained (Amy, Interview, 11-4-14). Famous people doing interviews led to more famous people doing interviews, creating a steady stream of Matt's Bats Chats for years, as reflected in Table 5.1 above. More specifically, they represented a range of relationships to baseball, as shown in Table 5.2 below. Some of them were Nationals players. Some were related to the Nationals: by marriage, as a fan, and as a staffer. Half were media people: broadcasters for TV and radio, sportswriters for the newspaper and social media, and baseball bloggers. Among these media people, half were kids (ages 9-18).

Table 5.2

"Matt's Bats Chats" Interviewees (March 2013-February 2015)

	Interviewees	Institutional Affiliation
Broadcast Media		
	Radio announcer	Mid-Atlantic Sports Network, Nationals
	TV reporter	Mid-Atlantic Sports Network, Nationals
	TV analyst	ESPN
	Sports news reporter	Washington Times, Nationals
	Sports writer	MLB.com, Nationals
Youth Bloggers		
	Youth correspondent	MLB.com
	Pro blogger, Baseball historian	MLB.com
	Pro blogger	MLB.com
	Daily Dish blogger	MLB.com
	Blogger & TV host	[Unknown Network]
Book Authors		
	Children's book author	Random House
	Adult baseball non-fiction author	Random House
Other People Related to the Nationals		
	Pitcher	Nationals
	Pitcher	Nationals
	Catcher	Nationals
	Pitcher's wife	Nationals
	Nationals ball girl	Nationals
	Nationals fan	The Nationals Archive
Other People Related to Baseball		
	Memorabilia salesman	Art of the Game
	Electric slugger [bat] player	National Symphony Orchestra

It makes good sense that media people would be especially interested in saying yes to Matt's Bats' Chats. Media people are ostensibly experts at doing what publics must do: clamor for attention (Warner, 2002). To go to Matt's Bats was to go to a media person who appeared expert at engaging wider audiences. For example, a 16-year-old MLB Youth Correspondent noted that her interest in Matt was due not only to his knowledge of baseball, but his demonstrated capacity to make a name for himself, building an audience from the ground up. By writing about Matt, and retweeting him, she could potentially attract his readers—just as he could use his interview with her as "leverage" (Interview, 10-15-14). (This was a common practice across all the four kid bloggers I interviewed who had larger followings: they interviewed each other.)

Further, because Matt's Bats featured a child's perspective, it potentially offered access to a plentiful market of new readers: kids. Through Matt's Bats, this young correspondent could generate and share content of interest to young readers—befitting what she saw as her mission in working for MLB: to get kids participating, growing up as fans, so that they might stay engaged into adulthood. Just like for any public, recruiting new relationships was critical to MLB's future success: "It's always the next generation of fans. You know, baseball depends on that for its livelihood too" (Interview, 10-15-14).

To give another example, The Voice of the Nationals, MASN radio broadcaster Dave Jageler, celebrated how Matt's Bats "got the ball rolling " for him in social media—increasing his followers dramatically even at their first interaction (Interview 10-24-14; also see above, Figure 5.3). As a more traditionally-trained career journalist, he was wary about privacy and distance online, but also recognized that getting on social media was necessary to his professional work now:

The way that the business was going is, you almost have to be on Twitter to

> know what is going on… So I'm like, 'You know what, I can justify doing this, to at least be a research tool to help with my job. (Interview, 10-24-14)

Through Matt's Bats, he started learning about hosting a following on social media. It was something I noted he was clearly getting good at, as evidenced by this exchange at the close of our interview, when he asked me to stay, too: "Now I get notifications of people who follow me. So I see now you're a Twitter follower. Will you stay on for the season?" (Interview, 10-24-14)

In fact, I did stay on for the season, and week-after-week became more of a fan as my Twitter (by default) just kept me subscribed and reading. As the months went by, I felt connected to these people I'd interviewed—like personalities who were now part of my day (on Twitter). I live in Texas, and follow baseball in DC now. I'd like to buy a ticket to see a Nationals game someday soon, and I'm fairly likely to buy a Nationals jersey, too, which raises to awareness another reason that interviews were so attractive to people: relations are big business.

Interviews could potentially increase the social or economic capital of the organizations the interviewees were affiliated with. Among other MLB franchises, the Nationals were known to be especially supportive of fans who showcased what was so special about the team (Jeff Zullo, Interview, 10-28-14). Fans like Nationals Archivists weren't naive about why teams like the Nationals were supportive. Fan Allan Peterson noted the impact of his relations with the team on his own wallet: the "closer the bond" with the players on Twitter, the more passionate he felt; and the more passionate he felt, the more money he spent. "Forward-looking teams like the Nationals recognize that," he explained, appreciatively acknowledging the team's valuing of giving fans entree to relate more closely to the team. "They embrace it" (Interview, 10-1-14).

So did lots of other people, as evidenced by the ongoing stream of organizations and media people who'd give Matt access to do interviews, or ask to interview him. Philanthropic organizations would give Matt press credentials annually to do interviews with baseball celebrities at their events, which he'd write up with photos and interviews. They'd also get publicity by interviewing Matt themselves, as other Nationals bloggers and media people understood. For example, network television like Fox5 DC kept Matt on their interview roster for years, calling him up most recently to give live commentary before the Nationals 2014 Post-Season Series began; and afterward, they'd praise his performance on Twitter (making them visible to Matt's Bats fans, who would be among the expected target audience of their sports coverage). Over time, more corporate entities would increasingly see the value of promoting Matt's Bats, too. And the impact of their circulation of Matt's Bats was both stabilizing and destabilizing, as we'll see in the next section. But first, some implications of these findings about circulation for are suggested for literacy education.

What Might This Have to Do With Writing in Schools?

As we've seen, Matt's Bats' perspectives and texts were authentically valuable to different groups of people in the world. What might this this mean for us as educators, scaffolding young writers' entry into a networked age where their audiences may be diverse and many? Here are some practices and problems we might consider:

1. Recruiting a faithful following. Matt's Bats found its most faithful audience were the fans who followed him on Twitter and built relationships over time as they talked there about the thing they cared about in common: baseball. Recruiting participation by inviting interviews seems like a particularly promising entry point for connecting our classrooms more widely into the world.

In classrooms, we might practice with children reaching out to the people and organizations we admire or want to be associated with, and engage them in ongoing (written) conversation about the things we mutually care about. If we can turn these interactions into a following—a steady group of subscribers—it may be possible for a teacher to create a standing audience for his or her classroom from year-to-year, engaging a broad community of people who share their interests—perhaps a particular issue or perspective or approach a class takes up that becomes their signature connection to the wider world. A teachers' relationship to the world through social media could offer some continuity here, as could school environments in which children curate web portfolios from year to year with continuous support.

2. Making it a "thing." Matt's Bats also found successes as it turned its relations into things—that is, digital artifacts that were easy to follow and share, like interviews and logos. By making artifacts of them, they could be displayed and listed on the blog, and serve as a standing representation of connections and a recruitment tool for new relations who might be attracted to adding their names to a socially-impressive list. They could also be shared by others, making them mutually profitable.

In classrooms, we too might artifact our experiences with others—making them not only into photos or narratives we share with each other and our families, but public displays recognizing the best moments of those experiences, featuring our allies in positive ways. Imagine, for example, the difference between having a guest speaker in class and thanking them privately, vs. featuring attractive photos and captions or an interview with that person in a spreadable media that they could share with the people that matter for their own goals, like friends, co-workers, bosses, customers, etc. As suggested by Latour (1986), and demonstrated in the examples above, we too might strive to make relations visible, durable, and combinable—so that the rewards of supporting classrooms are clear, compelling, and more constantly circulating in the public sphere.

On (De|Re)Stabilization

Though networks are always at risk of coming undone (Callon, 1986), Matt's Bats was pretty secure all in all. Reviewing the texts described above, we can see how they were routine occurrences: ongoing talk with Nationals fans who were subscribers to @MattsBats on Twitter, and ongoing series of interviews that proved to be very attractive to, and easily spreadable by, high-profile baseball insiders. As shown above, they'd engage with Matt in person and correspond with him in emails and Tweets, and essentially became a kind of reliable core group of participants in Matt's Bats. Returning again to the baseball card analogy, if we imagine Matt setting up these others like baseball cards and playing them like a team (as he would do with his little brother) (Interview, Matt, on Baseball with Matt, 3-22-13). Playing the role of the General Manager (as in his Holiday Baseball Gift Guides, he'd align the different players based on their strengths, putting them in a line-up for Team Matt's Bats. But he could also change up the players. It's something baseball does more generally as a sport. It keeps people watching. In the "hot stove" winter months between seasons, trades and new contracts give fans something to keep talking about. Indeed, Matt's Bats, the baseball industry, and every other public (Warner, 2002) had this same burden: they had to keep in constant conversation with ever-increasing and new interlocutors.

Like the industry in which he was immersed, Matt's Bats would meet that challenge by inviting new players to join his team—giving his fans new things to talk about. Matt's Bats accomplished this by recruiting outside of the core group of local players his fans were closely tied to; he also brought in power hitters drawn from far and wide across the baseball industry who could hit home runs (like driving tens of thousands of readers to his blog). They meant business—literally. They were commercial entities, interested in Matt's Bats' promotions of their products and services. As I'll show below, these new powerhouses were experts in delivery. Collectively, they would stabilize Matt's Bats by extending its potential readership; they would destabilize Matt's Bats by introducing competing perspectives; and they would restabilize Matt's Bats by allowing it to hold these competing perspectives under one banner. Below, I offer a closer look at a third genre of appreciation—the *promotion*—and how it played out for Team Matt's Bats.

Promotions and Stabilization

From MLB to Microsoft, big businesses wanted Matt's Bats. Over the years, they'd increasingly circulate Matt's Bats' texts and be featured in Matt's Bats blog in the form of *promotions*. By promotions, I mean blog posts that applied Matt's Bats signature positivity to the display of a commercial product, service, or business. Generally, as compared to Matt's Bats enactment of the interview genre, promotions turned Matt's exuberant lens from people to things; from local relations to distant ones; and from charity work to commercial endorsement.

Typically, it was Matt and his parents who reached out to businesses. They'd email, telling them about his blog, his Twitter followers, his love for their product, and his desire to share some experience of that thing with his readers. Reaching out to businesses was something of a family literacy practice; as I observed, his mom's Twitter was frequently used to publicly engage businesses to make everyday requests, suggestions, offer praise, or enter giveaways for (baseball-related) products. This practice of reaching out to businesses to seek opportunities extended to her son's blog. As Matt's mom explained:

> I've learned from this process (laughs) that it doesn't hurt to ask. That the worst people can say is no. And the best that can happen is they say yes. And it's amazing the results you can get (Amy, Interview, 11-4-14).

When they agreed to send Matt products or invite him to visit, Matt would collect photos or images of those things and write joyfully about their finest features, publishing these as blog posts. For example:

- Baseball parks would say yes to Matt's requests to have experiences there to write about: they'd offer him personal tours of the stadium and press box, invitations to batting practice, and swag with the team's logo like t-shirts, sunglasses, beach towels, etc. Matt would write about them in blog posts with titles like "Petco Park Is Perfect" followed by a glowing review: "Let me tell you: I have a new favorite ballpark!... The stadium was family-friendly and had breathtaking views, like the panoramic view of the city's skyline. The concourses were open and pretty. My mom said it felt like a hotel!" (Matt's Bats, 2014, August 8)
- Manufacturers of Matt's favorite baseball things (e.g., toys, games, books, and equipment) would agree to send items Matt liked or wanted, so that he could include them in a Holiday Baseball Gift Guide. The guide was response to Matt's readers who had often requested he tell them what baseball-related gift to buy for kids. Matt would request the products, write about why they liked him, link to the manufacturer's site or where to purchase, and run Twitter contests to give them away to his readers.

These new contacts gave Matt new stuff to write about, which was especially valuable in the off-season when it was harder to come up with writing ideas.

In response to Matt's promotion of them, many of these new contacts would promote Matt's Bats in return. They'd circulate his image, tweets, blog posts, etc. in their own social media. Some of these would expose Matt's Bats to huge audiences. For example, when Matt asked Microsoft to cover their store opening event with Nationals pitcher Stephen Strasbourg, Microsoft decided to feature Matt in the event playing X-Box against with him, and posted Matt's photo on their Facebook (1.3 million subscribers) and Twitter (813,000 followers); though they only used Matt's first name on Twitter, Matt's Bats fans would tag the photo

(@MattsBats) so that people would know this was Matt. In another example, the big publisher, Simon & Schuster, agreed to send Matt an Advanced Copy of Derek Jeter's new children's book. They liked Matt's review so much that they posted a big photo of Matt, a compliment about how great he was, and a link to it on their Facebook page Simon Kids (20,000 subscribers), as did the legendary player himself, Derek Jeter (2.6 million subscribers). Their timing was spot on. Posted during Jeter's retirement from baseball week when lots of international attention was on the player, Jeter's link to Matt's Bats (Figure 5.6) brought tens of thousands of new visitors to Matt's Bats, generating Facebook likes and shares in the thousands for the featured product.

Figure 5.6. Matt's Bats on athlete Derek Jeter's Facebook page. (Jeter, 2014)

Many of these promotions led to ongoing relations with these organizations or series of similar promotions with other organizations. That is, one successful translation of Matt's Bats seemed to set up the next. For example, Jeter Publishing would send Matt more books to review in the future, and he'd promote them in similar ways; or one ballpark saying yes to a tour led other ballparks to do the same; or one successful year of giveaways in a Holiday Guide led to its becoming an annual event. In this way, promotions engaged relatively stable chains of association or re-representation—the kind of activity that brings stability to an actor-network (see Spinuzzi, 2008). These kinds of promotions became a somewhat predictable routine. These relations with businesses were important to boosting Matt's Bats' visibility, but generally relied on Matt's Bats seeking them out serially to keep the relations going.

By contrast, the most stable, widespread delivery of Matt's Bats would come from organizations that sought Matt out, asking him to write for them. These were broadcast media entities that asked to deliver Matt's writing on their websites, which would essentially turn his internet traffic into theirs. There were two giants in baseball media who did this. The first of these media giants was MLB.com. They signed him as an MLB Pro Blogger and included him on their website's standing list of all the MLB Pro Blogs. Within the larger community of all MLB blogs, the Pros were an elite group of industry insiders, including MLB players, professional writers, and other celebrities. They'd occasionally circulate his posts by featuring them as a Blog of the Day (Adam, Interview, 9-22-14). And they'd circulate a link to Matt's Bats routinely on their blog, in posts listing the most popular (heavily-trafficked) MLBlogs by pros and amateurs: ranked as "Latest Leaders" (monthly) and "Top 100" (annually).

The second of these media giants was MASNSports.com, a major sports website run by the regional sports broadcast company, the Mid-Atlantic Sports Network (owned by the Washington Nationals and Baltimore Orioles franchises). Among the most high-profile sports writers and editors around, they'd feature Matt's writing. As their website explains, this initiative was based on the realization that bloggers were "cranking out reports and opinions… at dizzying levels" and were "just as passionate about their baseball as our roster of writers" (Kerzel, 2015, para. 2). On their glossy, high-profile website, they featured Matt's posts. On their Twitter account, they pushed his monthly posts to their 30,000+ MASN followers.

Taken together, these media giants were recognizable experts in renewing attention; and their interest in Matt's Bats seemed to suggest that they recognized Matt's steady, high-quality content as an important vehicle for achieving that attention for themselves. Their delivery of Matt's Bats was reliable, fixing Matt's Bats profile on a standing websites (MLB Pro Bloggers) and routinely delivering each post on Twitter (MASN). In ANT-ish terms, we can recognize these as "standing sets" of re-representation (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 88) that help stabilize an actor-network. As is classic in a translation model (see Callon, 1986), they'd interest, enroll, and mobilize others toward the goal they had in common with Matt's Bats. But actor-networks are never quite stable (Callon, 1986). Below, I show the potentially destabilizing forces these new partnerships also introduced to Matt's Bats.

Promotions and (De|Re)Stabilization

Both fans and businesses wanted to see Matt's Bats in circulation, but they came from different perspectives. Matt's Bats expansion to participation from across the baseball industry introduced mildly destabilizing conflicts in goals between participants that were kept in check by the deft restabilizing moves of Matt's Bats. The following excerpt, again from Matt's Bats Turns Pro, suggests the juxtaposition of these particular groups—MLB.com, to Nats fans on Twitter, to the professional writers apprenticing Matt into sports journalism:

> So, after about 230 posts and more than 58,000 viewers, this will be my last post on the old Matt's Bats and my first as a pro blogger for Major League Baseball on my new Matt's Bats website… Soon www.MattsBats.com will take you to the MLB site…I want to thank MLB Advanced Media so much

> for giving me this opportunity to be a pro blogger with MLB. It's like my dream come true. I also want to thank the incredible Nats fans who read my blog and talk with me about baseball on Twitter. And finally I want to thank the people who helped me get this by editing my posts, allowing me to interview them, teaching me how to be a better writer and giving me good stories to write about.

Though Matt's Bats would bring all of these interests together in one blog post—and one network—for years, their juxtaposition revealed some differences between their interests. Two of these points of difference (and how Matt's Bats addressed them) are discussed next.

Tensions between corporate and fan interests. "Soon MattsBats.com will take you to the MLB site." The move was to a commercially-sponsored site that was heavy with advertising, which generated revenue for MLB. Assessing the site more broadly, the commercial entity's profiting off volunteer fan labor seemed to be odds with the gift economy of participatory culture online. The MLB blogging community at large expressed this conflict early on in the transition of the blogging platform to a WordPress template splashed front, center, and top right with advertisements. It was MLB (not the bloggers themselves) who would profit from this ad revenue. For fans like the Archivists, the point of their participation was clearly to be non-profit (see Allan Peterson, Interview, 10-1-14), channeling money into charitable efforts.

The organizational/administrative practices of the MLB site seemed at odds with the democratic aspirations of everyday bloggers. From early on when MLBlogs moved to ads, revenue was a source of tension, as was evident in the archives of their online discussions. Some bloggers were concerned about not being compensated. Some bloggers were concerned about not getting the recognition they deserved for their hard work, while other blogs that were neglected or less deserving has an MLB Pro emblem given to them. Also, it wasn't entirely clear how one got to be an MLB Pro Blogger—other than by knowing someone on the inside. Then, if your name wasn't on that elite list, there was no directory of all the blogs so people could find you. So there was really no way to be really visible, unless you'd been picked for the elite group, or your blog traffic ranked in the Top 100 of blogs for the month. To poorly compensate fans, or not make fans very visible, or rank them for profit—these were the kind of things potentially at odds with the kind of charitable, lifting-up-fans-as-equals mindset associated with fandom. In Matt's Bats' case, there was a consciousness among participants that Matt's level of access might make people feel envious (Adam, Interview, 9-22-14; Upside Down FP, Interview, 9-29-14).

With this consciousness there was also conscience: Matt's Bats purposefully found ways to use its commercial affiliations to serve the interests of fans. Matt's Bats would harness the access afforded by MLB Pro Blogs to make fans and what they cared about more visible in the world. The most common way was to feature fans on Matt's Bats big platform. In the excerpt above, for example, Matt's first response to getting this big MLB opportunity was to thank the Nationals fans who talked to him on Twitter and read his blog. Moving forward, he'd continue to celebrate his fans and link to them routinely. He'd write about his appearances on their blogs or interviews they did with him, effectively promoting their blogs to his own readers. He'd also invite people to guest post on his blog, including some kid bloggers aspiring to get their own start. He'd also feature causes that fans and players raised money for, like spreading the word about #EndNF (to benefit medical research on neurofibromatosis), taking the Ice Bucket Challenge (to benefit research on Lou Gehrig's disease) and tagging other fans like the Nationals Archivists to participate.

The only profits they were bragging on were non-profits. Annually, Matt's

Bats would ask fans to come together for a lung cancer charity event that Matt's Bats readers raised $11,000 for one year (this is now an annual tradition for them). Featuring non-profit endeavors in Matt's Bats would seem to lend itself to keeping charitable fans interested, despite the for-profit nature of the platform. Twitter fans of the Nationals recognized, too, that relations to commercial baseball entities was mutually beneficial: "[The Nationals] reward us because they know we're driving things—we're driving fans to them and having a good time" (Upside Down FP, Interview, 9-29-14). This recognition was notably a "perspective shift" for Archivists like Allan Peterson, who described how his relationship to the team gave him a new perspective on the business of baseball behind the scenes; and it turned him into "different kind of baseball fan," who was "a little bit more serious, almost business-like" about his fandom (Interview, 10-1-14).

Indeed, Matt's Bats demonstrated this kind of business-savvy fandom—not shying away from commercial partners but seeking them out to compensate fans. Matt's Bats Holiday Gift Guide is a good example of how this worked. Because his fans wanted to know what to buy their kids for holiday gifts, Matt contacted the companies that made his favorite products and asked them for some of those products to give away to his fans (Amy, Interview, 11-4-14; also see above). This was a kind of family literacy practice; Matt's mom habitually wrote on social media to companies she wanted to send appreciations or complaints or get things from, as she recognized these public correspondences were sources of benefit and leverage to consumers. Here, they would use it to get things for fans: in return for their reading about the products and following the companies on social media, they could be entered to win Matt's Bats giveaways. The point wasn't to profit. Matt's Bats wasn't getting paid by any of these companies to promote their products; they were products he already liked and he reached out to the companies. The small among of money generated by linking to Amazon.com products was used to pay for shipping the giveaway items to winners.

In addition, Matt used his platform to endorse products his friends were making whose proceeds went to charity. For example, alongside commercial products, the Holiday Gift Guide invited people to buy things like a fellow kid baseball blogger's new baseball history book (with proceeds going to three charities) or a t-shirt from The Nationals Archive shirt shop (with proceeds going to fan charities). For the winners of the products, who were mostly kids, Matt would also blog or tweet about them, using the event to make those fans a little more famous too. Some toys Matt brought to a local children's charity, and then he blogged about that charity as well. In sum, Matt's Bats used its commercial partners to make fans and their interests visible, and to reward them. In doing so, Matt's Bats managed to promote commercial interests and fan interests at the same time. This gave Matt's Bats the alignment in goals that successful translation requires (per Callon, 1986).

Tensions between professional and fan journalism. Another potentially destabilizing conflict had to do with what kind of writing counts as real writing in baseball. The people Matt thanked for teaching him to "be a better writer," and giving him "good stories to write about" were mostly professional broadcasters and journalists (Matt's Bats, 2013, August 26). As Matt learned through his interviews with these media people, their perspectives could be at odds with fan writing. First, there was tension around bias in reporting—something reporters professionally disassociated themselves with. The notion of unbiased sports reporting was introduced to Matt by the first journalist he interviewed, a female sportswriter for a major newspaper:

> I am not actually a Nationals fan. As a journalist covering the team I am there to work, to cover the team in an objective manner and to tell compelling stories. Whether they win or lose is irrelevant to me.... Most

> beat writers will tell you that they grew up as a fan of a specific team, but once you get into this business, that part of being a fan must fade away if you're going to be able to do your job well and remain objective. I am still a fan of the game of baseball, though, in a larger sense and always will be. (Matt's Bats, 2013, April 3)

Matt's dad explained, "That concept of being an objective reporter like rocked his world" (Adam, Interview, 9-22-14). As Matt wrote in response to the reporter,

> It was astonishing to me to learn that [she] is not a Nats fan. I thought that if you write about the Nationals almost each and every day that the Nationals have to be your favorite team! After all, you know all the players. But she said that she doesn't care if they win or lose because she just has to write the news. Now I am learning more of the difference between being a journalist and a color commentator. I want to be a commentator when I grow up, because I want to be a Nats fan and be able to root for them. (Matt's Bats, 2013, April 3)

In response to this problem of perspective, Matt took steps to clarify the kind of sports writer he wanted to be—often citing F.P. Santangelo, the color commentator for the Nationals, as a role model because he was paid and could give his opinions about the team. Though Matt seemed to maintain this position steadily over the years, he didn't let the problem of bias go. Across two years of interviews, he'd ask media people about being a fan of a team vs. a fan of the game—probing and wondering and writing about this concern as he talked to professionals about their perspectives.

This is related to a second tension around Matt's writing as a fan: the problem of (de)professionalization in sports writing. Dave Jageler the Nationals radio broadcaster explained that bloggers who got credentials to be in the club house and media rooms sometimes exhibited "unprofessional behavior"—doing things that trained reporters know not to do, like asking for autographs, posing for pictures, or asking for personal favors; but Matt was in bounds, because he as a kid: There is something unwritten, or just kind of passed down to me, that when you have that press credential, you act in a certain way… You're getting far more access than the average person can get. And it's almost like an abuse of the access to then turn around and go ask for the autograph for a personal reason…

> I think it's okay for someone of that age to be able to straddle the fence on both sides. But something that as he gets older, if he wants to pursue this, he's going to have to answer that, and at some point, you're going to have to put that aside, and try to treat them on the level and exhibit the professionalism that you need to be in the media. (Interview, 10-24-14)

At a time when the team was giving some media rights and credentials to bloggers, the "line of demarcation" between fans and media was something that teams like the Nationals would have to work out, as a kind of "quasi-media" (Allan Peterson, Interview, 10-1-14). The distinction between being a "real" baseball writer and a blogger was something Matt seemed to take as a matter of fact, though. He liked blogging, but he aspired to newspapers:

> When you're writing for a newspaper, you're encouraged to do your best work. And that's what I want to do— my best work in every post. When you're just writing a blog, you're really doing it for the fun of it… Sometimes it turns into something like what my blog did. But I want to be a real baseball writer." (Interview, Matt, 9-27-14)

Over the years of posts, I saw evidence of Matt's Bats pursuing these issues. He continued to probe the issues of bias in his interviews with media people. His writing sometimes took on a "fan of the game" perspective—for example, when voting players from different teams into the All Star Game (not just from the Nationals, his favorite team), and writing a series of posts covering the strengths and weaknesses of other teams. He wondered about what age he should stop getting autographs and taking pictures with players. His most visible writing to date, guest posts for the media giant MASN, are notably more restrained in tone. They don't feature Matt's memorabilia like autographs and photos with players. They focus on the team and players he's interested in, but in evidence-based, controlled commentary that demonstrates a broader awareness of the field of baseball.

This broader perspective was something Nationals Archivist Allan Peterson also talked about. Becoming a "different fan" stemmed from his participation in social media with other fans and the Nationals through collaborative projects:

> The more that you get immersed in [baseball], the more you have appreciation for the other teams and everything else that goes on in baseball…Before, I was able to appreciate baseball just for what's going on the field. Now I think it's become a little bit more serious—businesslike to some extent… It's a perspective shift… for better or for worse, and on balance more for better. I've just become a different baseball fan. (Interview, 10-1-14)

Matt's writing revealed a similar broadening of perspective over time. Matt appreciated different views on bias. He thoughtfully represented and explored what professional broadcasters and journalists took as professional code, while also keeping his eye on a niche for himself in the kind of "color commentary" that was a legitimate professional response to baseball. He sought out a space where people would appreciate his enthusiastic opinion, and recognized its importance to fans and its value as content other media would want to circulate.

Promotions were really important to Matt's Bats' circulation. As noted above, this was because they offered stabilizing opportunities for Matt's text to be delivered routinely to wider audiences, as well as (de|re)stabilizing opportunities to fold in different perspectives. As above, like a baseball team trading for new players, bringing commercial entities offered Team Matt's Bats a chance to interest new fans, and the possibility of making new kinds of plays possible. Imagine, again, Matt arranging and rearranging these different players like baseball cards, juxtaposing the different kinds of players or teams against others, playing around with them for fun, even roughing them up a little in his exuberance:

> With my baseball cards, I play games, where I pretend the cards are real players and they play against my brother's cards. I play with baseball cards very roughly, and I have to admit, after a while they get out of shape (Matt, Interview, by Nadel, 2013)

In his imaginative and game play with baseball, it was Matt in the role of General Manager, a position from which he could call the plays. Returning from the metaphor, we can see this is perhaps an unexpected position to see a kid in—running contrary to the dominant discourse about keeping unwitting kids safe from advertisers who prey on them. Most of the time, it was Matt seeking them out, naming what it was he hoped to get from them. Drawing on Matt's family's literacy practices in social media, Matt was learning how to use social media to his advantage as a consumer. Selectively, the family recruited businesses they genuinely appreciated, with the understanding that these partnerships attractive public relations opportunities for businesses while they also served Matt and his readers.

Matt's family and the Nationals Archivists aren't the only bloggers and fans who recognize the value in collaborations with bigger commercial media entities. According to Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013), participatory culture more broadly has found audiences actively pursuing opportunities to collaborate or co-create with companies. Up to now, it has been more commonplace to focus on the relations between people and companies as oppositional; for example, pitting grassroots media in opposition to traditional broadcast media, or economic motives around commodities against social against motives of the internet's gift economy. But in our participatory culture, relationships between these groups are complex and intertwined. They don't just resist each other, it seems; they participate in something together.

The way networked communities collaborate is clearly a financial benefit to industry (for example, companies get revenue from monetizing user-generated content—like MLB.com profiting on the advertisements they affixed to all MLB Blogs). However, fans also find their own benefits, like social recognition, social connection, opportunities to influence culture, etc. Though fans and companies interests are never fully aligned, and there are clashes and unevenness between them, some of their interests run parallel. It is at these points of intersection that scholars like Jenkins et al. (2013) see a way forward; they are finding connected individuals and groups shaping the communication environment, relating to broadcast or commercial logics in ways that redirect their attention and resources to be more responsive to their communities' interests (see also Lessig, 2008). Though they acknowledge concerns about corporate exploitation of audience labor, they suggest it must also be acknowledge that the emerging system of collaboration also offers more potential than before for greater diversity and democratization in the voices heard in the public sphere.

What Might This Have to Do With Writing in Schools?

What might this mean for schools, if this is the communication landscape that our children will be writing in? Certainly, it will remain important for media literacy education to educate young people to protect themselves from corporate overreach and to engage in cultural critique. But what if we engaged them also with positive models of productive engagement in participatory culture? For educators interested in that, *genres of appreciation* may offer a starting place for imagining the kinds of things we might do in schools to support children's learning about digital delivery. Here are a couple of them.

1. Assembling a strong team. For Matt's Bats, a strong team was a diverse one: it recruited players of all kinds—contact hitters (local fan favorites) and power hitters (companies and big media). In our classrooms, we might purposefully reach out to a broad range of contacts: local and distant, amateur and professional, non-profit and commercial. To authentically appreciate them, these would need to be people and organizations we genuinely admire and want to learn from, and that we could write about in honest and appreciative ways. To locate these contacts, we might ask children to brainstorm not just who they want to talk to, but who might like to talk to them, and why they might genuinely be interested in doing so. In this way, we might help children understand the authentic value of their writing in the world and learn how to making meaningful connections to pursue common interests with other people in the world.

For example, the recent popularity of "unboxing" videos made by kid's reviewing toys on YouTube shows examples of kids who've found productive ways to share their feelings about those toys with companies, appreciating and critiquing. As Marsh (2014b) noted in her case study of a young boy watching YouTube unboxing videos, though on the surface the practices might appear in a negative light as "straightforward consumerist practices" and "vicarious consumption," observation revealed the practices were less about serious consumption than about taking pleasure in the viewing and talk about them. The boy consumed not so much the goods on display as the play practices of the children he watched. Most of all, the practice was an opportunity to participate in affinity spaces (Gee, 2005). As Marsh suggested, it is more common to rail against commercial goods as being "toxic" in nature, but material goods are actually central to the construction of human relationships (a point ANT also recognizes).

She points out that marketing to children is also not unique to postmodern childhood; playthings for children were produced as early as the 16th century, and mass-produced since the 18th century (Buckingham, 2011). What is unique about this moment in history, then, is not that children engage with commercial entities, but that children now can be recognized through social media as consumers with the right to publicly participate, demand, request, collaborate, and benefit from their relationships to these commercial entities.

***2.* Becoming a fan of the game.** Over time, Matt's appreciation for different perspectives from the baseball industry and fandom allowed him to try out writing differently: not just as a fan of his team, but as a fan of the game in all of its different aspects, and all of its different teams. Like Matt's Bats, our classrooms might take on the project of circulating multiple perspectives, exploring the tensions between them, and seeing whether and how they might work together. As ANT would, we might involve learners in identifying different groups' interests and looking for convergence.

Also, like the professionals Matt interviewed, we might invite learners to think about what ethical guidelines might be important to their writing genres of appreciation. For example, if they write about commercial entities, we might invite them to think about the importance of things like: transparency (e.g., being forthcoming about our ties to others; authenticity (e.g., being credible in our recommendations); and "healthy skepticism" when and if others bid for their participation (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 175). Certainly, children's opinions shouldn't be for sale; Matt's Bats weren't, nor were his t-shirts. His partnerships were purposefully and authentically selected, and he was transparent about the process he'd used to select products for the holiday giveaway. Engagements like these might offer good opportunities to discuss the kinds of appreciation in value that different members of a partnership get, whether financial or social or both, and critically assess any unevenness in those benefits.

Finally, we might lift new voices: Whose perspectives do we find less often represented? How might we lift those up? How might we use our platforms (or those of other organizations) to draw attention to the people and things we value? In these ways, we might prepare children for the networked culture they will live in, where they will encounter (and already do) a mélange of interests online. Rather than name some influences as good or bad a priori (something ANT avoids), we might invite them to think to see who is good for what. We might help them to learn to navigate the mélange of interests that we call the internet, and to do so in smart ways that work for themselves and for others. If writers can learn to appreciate other people's interests, and how they align with their own interests, they might be better prepared to use their writing to cultivate mutually-beneficial relations and achieve their whatever goals they choose with these partnerships—whether they are civic, or commercial, or both.

Chapter 6: reKindle

As the story of reKindle goes, it was a viral video on YouTube that sparked 10-year-old Kaylee and her dad, Chris, to take action. "Making Homeless Smile—Worldwide" featured two popular young Muslim YouTube vloggers talking about the "new worldwide trend" they'd started: helping the homeless (Saleh, 2013). The vloggers filmed themselves surprising homeless people with food, drinks, money, clothing, smiles, and hugs. In response, people from all around the globe filmed themselves doing the very same things. The vloggers compiled these clips into a montage video of people around the world giving to the homeless. Among those inspired by the video were Chris and his daughter, Kaylee.

They'd been sitting side-by-side in their living room, as they so often did when working on their different social media streams. Chris would be "geeking out on Facebook or emailing people" while Kaylee would be on her phone, Instagramming, making plans with her friends, or watching YouTube videos. It was common practice to share: "Hey, Dad, look at this… Hey, Kaylee, take a look at this." This time on the couch, Chris leaned over to Kaylee and shared "Making Homeless Smile—Worldwide" from his Facebook NewsFeed. Watching the montage of videos of people all around the world giving, both dad and daughter got "choked up" (Chris, Interview, 12-19-14). As Kaylee recalls the moment, "The Michael Jackson song 'We're Gonna Make A Change" was in the background, and I'm like 'Oh my goodness, we should do this… we should do this someday'" (Interview, 1-7-15).

But by "this," Kaylee and Chris meant two different things. Chris explained:

> Like I wasn't really thinking we should totally do "this" meaning we should do the video like these YouTubers did. That's what she heard. Right? What I was thinking, we should do what they were actually doing in the video. Go do nice things. Right? So that was, that was the disconnect that ended up

> being this magical thing. Right? She thought when I said, 'We should do this' or when we said that, she meant make the videos. I didn't even have a video camera at the time. (Chris, Interview, 12-19-14)

So without her dad realizing, when Kaylee and Chris gathered a group of people to take food and drinks to their local homeless, Kaylee brought along her iPod and took hip-shot recordings. After they got home, she realized she could export directly from her iPod to YouTube, and in two hours figured out how to produce her very first YouTube video. In clips with captions, she showed others how do it too: "helping homeless pepole [sic]," "find shelters around you," "and just give back" (reKindle, 2013, August 10). Her intent was to spread the idea: "That video inspired me, so I wanted to make that video to inspire others" (Interview, 1-7-15).

As it turned out, Kaylee's video was really moving. It tugs at the heartstrings as a violin plays over images of giving to the homeless. Its quality impressed even her dad, a professional web marketer: "Kaylee's first video with that sad violin [song]… she nailed it. Oh my god, when I watched that video, I was like, Oh, my god…We need to do *this* again. So we went out the next time, and she made another video" (Chris, Interview, 12-19-14).

In fact, they didn't just make more videos. They made something of them. Drawing on his professional expertise in social media, Chris apprenticed Kaylee in the art of network-building. He built on Kaylee's impulse to inscribe and her intent to inspire. He showed her how to make reKindle into a 'thing' with a name, a logo, a mission statement, multiple web platforms, videos, subscribers, and volunteers. As others took up reKindle's call over the next two years, it became a massive networked public dedicated to rekindling kindness in the world. Millions have watched reKindle's YouTube videos, and with this attention have come a constant flow of support and resources. reKindle continues to lengthen and strengthen today. A closer look at reKindle revealed what it made available for Kaylee to learn about digital delivery to make her videos (net)work in the world.

The two-minute YouTube video, "Volunteering in Phoenix," exemplifies a typical reKindle video. The following narrative describes its contents.

"Volunteering in Phoenix"

It begins with the call to action, a call to reKindle. reKindle's logo is featured center screen (Figure 6.1). Out of the "i" bursts a flame with a heart in the center. reKindle is hot stuff.

Figure 6.1. reKindle's logo (reKindle, 2015, January 5)

"I Can Change the World With My Own Two Hands…"

A soft, sweet soundtrack begins to play, as 11-year-old Kaylee walks out of her front door draped in blue backpacks. She wobbles back and forth, playing with her balance, and holding all of that weight on her small shoulders. She loads the backpacks into the car, and then smiles into the camera. Thumbs up. Then, in the car with her dad, the camera pans a palm-tree lined street, searching for someone in need. Delivering backpacks like this has been a signature activity for Chris and Kaylee ever since they learned from local homeless people what they really needed: things like socks, washcloths, and way to keep everything moving. They spot a lone man on a street corner. He smiles and nods, reaching for the backpack. As they pull away, Chris smiles into the camera. Thumbs up.

"I Can Make Peace on Earth, With My Own Two Hands..."

Now, scenes of preparation get underway. In a warehouse, corporate volunteers in Santa hats are stuffing giant red stockings. In a living room, Kaylee and her friend are filling backpacks with donations of clothes and blankets and food, piled high all around them. In a church, people move boxes of donations. In the bus station, Kaylee stocks up on all-day passes to add to the stocking. Off camera, a local dental group is also collecting supplies by doing a signature reKindle "I Got Your Back" Backpack Drive. As these unfold, they are also posted to reKindle's Facebook page with thanks to the volunteers and an open invitation for you (whoever you are) to join too. Come December 20th and help deliver.

"I'm Gonna Help the Human Race, with My Own Two Hands…"

This is the day. Everyone and everything is gathering in a parking lot: buckets, stockings, bags, vehicles, donation, men, women, and children of all ages. Soon, they all get moving down the sidewalk into one line behind Kaylee and Chris, in matching t-shirts with their reKindle flames leading the way. Chris raises the camera up on a long pole to get a wide angle of the reKindlers following from behind, far into the distance. Then, they stop on the streets to give. A little boy holds his grandma in one hand and a backpack in the other, extending it to a homeless man. A man stands in his truck bed passes food as fast as he can to everyone who passes. A toddler hangs a shirt up on a fence in a make-shirt clothing display. Across the many giving scenes, the crowd grows into a multitude. They are too many to count. Afterward, reKindlers hug. Kaylee, back at home, adjusts her camera. There is still more to come.

"Use Your Own Two Hands..."

At the finale, everything overflows. Papa Johns loads pizzas in a truck until they reach the roof. In a parking lot, people are lying on the cold ground. Mats are strewn in every direction. Bags of things are piled up. Day has turned to night.

Volunteers pass slices of pizza hand-to-hand under the streetlights to a crowd of bundled, anonymous homeless. Then we fade to black, and words of thanks appear for the volunteers and sponsors who brought Christmas, comfort, and inspired “countless others” to bring more kindness into the world. The end is an invitation. Go online and join through the website or Facebook. This is how you reKindle.

On Distribution

“Volunteering in Phoenix” is illustrative of how reKindle typically performed distribution. Like call-and-response pattern of publics (Warner, 2002), reKindle distributed text in event-driven cycles. These cycles used social media to summon others to perform reKindle, and then re-represented those others’ performances of reKindle in further digital displays in social media that accumulated and condensed evidence of participation in reKindle over time.

Commonly, cycles began with a call to action. This call to participate was related to reKindle’s mission and its origin story. Recall from above the opening scene with reKindle’s logo suggesting its mission (to be kind and to spread kindness). This is followed by a hint at reKindle’s origins (Kaylee and her dad going out on the streets and filming it to inspire others). Cycles then typically continued with displays of people and things assembling. Recall the scenes of backpacks and stockings getting stuffed, donations piling up, volunteers moving things from here to there. These preparation scenes then led up to event scenes showing unification and mobilization. Recall the reKindle collective coming together and moving together in one line down the sidewalk, united behind a one man, one girl, and their banner: the reKindle flame. Finally, cycles ended in mobilization in social media. As above, the event is wrapped up into a montage video designed to be spreadable online and to recruit future reKindlers. In their general trajectory, reKindle’s cycles paralleled Callon’s (1986) moments of translation; they involved problem-setting, interesting others, enrolling others, and mobilizing others (see

Chapter 2).

At first, I called these cycles *campaigns* (steeping as I was early-ANT literature about how power gets consolidated at a distance, like Law 1986). But the militarist tenor of this vocabulary wasn't right for describing reKindle. As such, I searched for an echo of ANT's native French, and an etymological cousin of the goal-oriented *campaign* more befitting reKindle's sociality. I chose the term *compagnie*, or in English translation, *company*. It replaces the military sense of campaign (Latin prefix cam-) with a sense of togetherness (Latin prefix com-). Mining the multiplicity of dictionary definitions, several senses of compagnie/company describe how reKindle's performances of distribution variously involved:

- Visitors who are welcomed for enjoyment, as in 'inviting company' or 'keeping good company'
- A group who performs with a shared purpose, as in 'a company of actors' or 'a touring dance company;'
- Corporate activity, like strategic marketing and partnering to deliver services or goods. ("Compagnie", 2015; "Company", 2015-a; 2015-b)

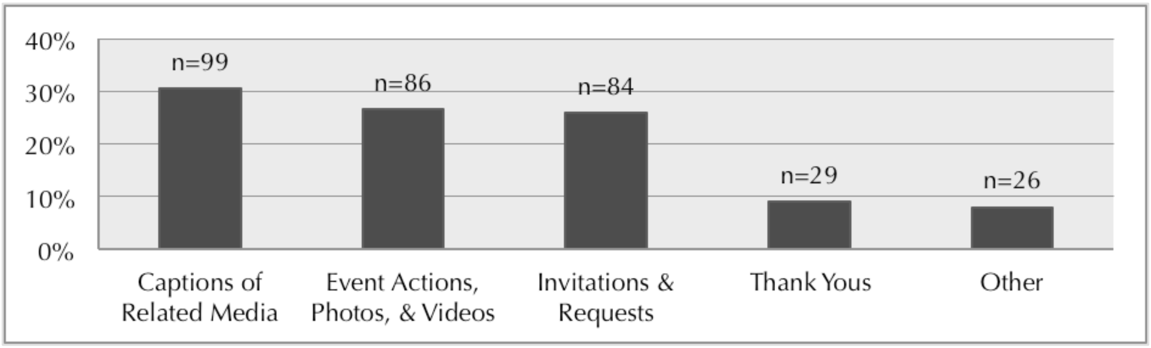
Indeed, reKindle's compagnie were performed: by interchangeable visitors performing with a shared purpose, who were represented strategically in social media in order to recruit increasingly powerful partners and wider participation. A first round of analysis revealed that compagnie cycle repeated again and again. A second round of analysis revealed the kinds of texts through which these cycles were repeatedly performed. I called these *genres of compagnie*.

Performing Niceties: Genres of Compagnie

A typology of genres in reKindle's Facebook posts over time (Table 6.1) yielded a broad finding that was startling in its simplicity: reKindle invited good company by doing what people generally refer to as "being nice". reKindle invited others to help and participate (25.9% of all posts), often using Facebook event pages. They displayed and celebrated shared accomplishments (26.5% of all posts). And the "remembered to say thank you (9% of all posts).

Table 6.1

Genres of reKindle's Facebook Posts (Over a 9-1/2 Month Period, 3/24/14-1/7/15)



We can see most of these genres reflected in "Volunteering in Phoenix". Recall the excerpt above: it begins with an *invitation* to reKindle, then displays *event preparations* for reKindle Christmas, and ends in an expression of *thanks* to all who helped. Though videos generally followed this linear invitation-display-thanks trajectory across a cycle, they also were repeated within cycles. For example, over the weeks leading up to reKindle Christmas, needs and thanks were posted repeatedly on Facebook, while this montage (if true to pattern) would be repeated even during other cycles to remind people about reKindle's work and invite them to join.

reKindle also kindly shared and responded to the work of others on Facebook. In fact, captioning of other media was what they did most often (30.6% of all posts). reKindle praised and commented on other people's links articles, videos, and news that shared reKindle's interests in homelessness and kindness. Table 6.2 shows some examples of these captions.

Table 6.2

reKindle's Captions on Facebook (Some Exemplars)

Description of Link Shared by reKindle	Source of Link	How reKindle Captioned the Content	Responses to reKindle
Video of an artist who buys homeless people's signs and makes art with them. This video is popular, with 17, 586 shares from Hoopla Ha.	*Hoopla Ha: Life With a Smile* ['Good News' Web News Aggregator]	"'If you can, just simply acknowledge the person. Let them see the humanity in you, seeing the humanity in them.'" ❤️ This man buys homeless people's signs and creates art with them! What a great way to reach out and change lives AND inspire others!	39 Likes 1 Comment (reKindle, 2014, November 19)
Photo and link to article titled "This Formerly Homeless Man Is Making 'Huts' For Those Without Shelter"	*Huffington Post Impact* ['Good News' Web News Aggregator]	"Formerly homeless man builds tiny shelters to those without homes. Absolutely beautiful!"	79 likes 1 Comment 23 Shares (reKindle, 2014, December 5)
Video titled: "How Does A Homeless Man Spend $100?"	*Josh Paler Lin Pranks* [Humor/Entertainment YouTube Channel]	"He Gave A Homeless Man $100 and Followed Him To See How He Spent It. You Won't Believe This!"	29 likes 1 Comment 1 Share (reKindle, 2014, December 23)
Photo of blankets stacked on park bench in winter with note about D.C. city worker who voluntarily took the blankets home to wash.	*Good News Network* ['Good News' Web News Aggregator]	"Good people making this world a better place!"	74 likes (reKindle, 2014, December 29)

These captions served to suggest, initiate, and reinforce connections between reKindle and distant others who were potential allies and resources. They also served to keep reKindle's subscribers focused on these issues. If people liked, shared, or commented on these captions on reKindle's Facebook page, their responses would by default be counted and recorded on the Facebook timeline, accumulating evidence supporting reKindle's cause or methods. By using captions to promote the work of others in social media, reKindle simultaneously invited others to do the same for them.

Here is a snapshot of how these genres of compagnie were performed in social media. A typical post on reKindle's Facebook page, Figure 6.2 shows corporate volunteers, giant red stockings, and boxes of donations preparing for reKindle Christmas.

Figure 6.2. Photo of reKindle Christmas on Facebook. (reKindle, 2014, December 10)

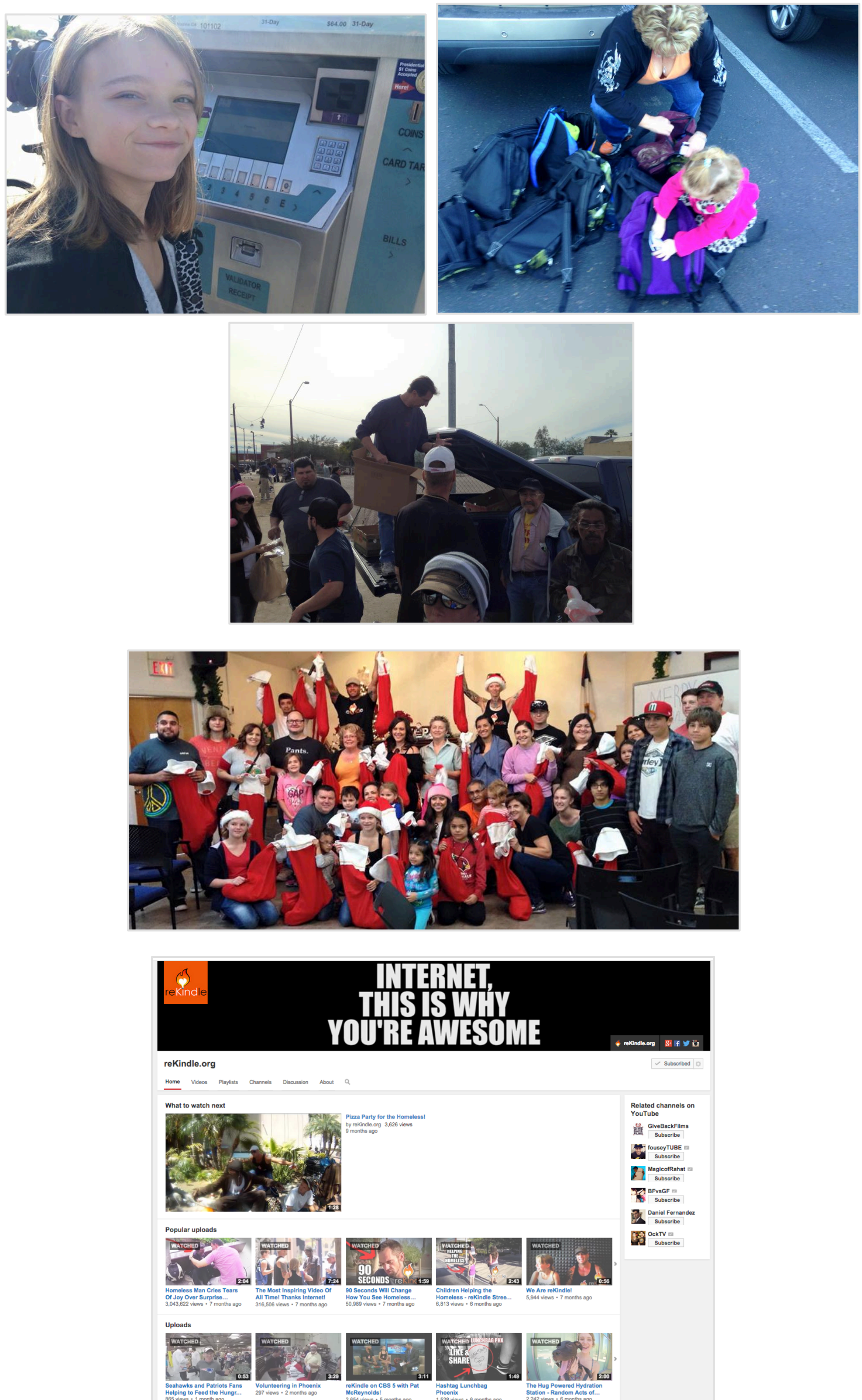
reKindle posted the photo to its public Facebook page with this caption:

> Thank you SO MUCH to the Botron Company Inc. for the wonderful donation! They packed 100 super sized stockings with warm hats, fresh socks, towels, soaps, sheets, games, combs, and other stuff for our local homeless! Want to add to the holiday cheer? There's still room in these stockings! Could use some bus passes, food vouchers, gift certificates, gloves, blankets, scarves, inspirational notes, gifts of ANY KIND to brighten up 100 homeless people's days at reKindle Christmas on December 20th!" (reKindle, 2014, December 10)

Notice here the presence of reKindle's favorite genres: the *thank you*, the *event display*, and *the invitation*. Notice, too, the compagnie event cycle parts are shown in microcosm: a mission is defined; participants are shown in preparation for an event; and then later they will be folded into a montage video. Also, we can see how reKindle suggests its partnership with its corporate partner, reinforcing the connection by tagging them; by doing so, this post could spread to Botron's Facebook timeline and its Facebook friends as well, potentially opening up new pathways for circulation.

reKindle could spread evidence of its good company by displaying it in social media with sharable artifacts: words, photos, and videos. Another example of reKindle's display is shown below in Figures 6.3 Excerpted from a series of ongoing Facebook posts during reKindle Christmas these images show reKindlers preparing and mobilizing, then coming together in a group photo, and then in a final montage video. Note across the images how the display of reKindle's spokespersons got deflated over time (Latour, 1986b) and folded in (Latour, 1996a) increasing numbers of people, things, and activities to represent reKindle.

Figure 6.3. Images of reKindle Christmas (Preparations, progress, group photo, and YouTube montage)



Similarly, the video "Volunteering in Phoenix" deflates weeks of activities, dozens of scenes, and countless people and things into two minutes of video. Through this kind of textual activity, ephemeral interactions and relations were fixed into digital artifacts that put reKindle's power on display—by showing ever-increasing masses of good company, moving reKindle from hand-to-hand, backpack-to-backpack, and screen-to-screen. These digital artifacts then served online as standing spokesthings for reKindle, that could vouch for reKindle's success day and night, far and wide, to anyone on the internet who might look.

What Might This Have To Do With Writing Instruction?

Kaylee's participation in reKindle allowed her to learn some things about the art of digital distribution. Though Kaylee didn't write on reKindle's Facebook page, she learned through peripheral participation: looking over her father's shoulder, filming events, delivering backpacks, greeting new reKindlers, etc. Her learning was evident in her interview. When I gave her a hypothetical problem, like stray animals in need of help, she explained how I could go about getting attention and resources from others online. What she described sounded very similar to a compagnie:

> [First] you're gonna say like, 'What do I need to help this thing?' And then you'll like say it. Like if you need like blankets or something. You'll be like, 'Hey, does anybody have some blankets? I'm trying to help this thing'… Then you can post that with like a picture of something sad. And they'll be like 'Oh, my goodness! We need to do something about this!' And so, like you can post the picture or video saying that. And usually it will catch on. And you tell your friends to tell their friends. And they tell their friends and their families and stuff that like, they need help. And… then usually like it just catches on from there. (Kaylee, Interview, 1-7-15)

As we can see here, Kaylee understood digital distribution as a process. She knew to define a problem clearly; to take the problem and her efforts to resolve it, and fold them into visual, spreadable media; and to spread the word with the intent of reaching ever-widening circles of friends.

She also learned about making her program visible by fixing her image and actions into media, and then representing that media as she shook hands with new reKindlers. In her interview, she talked about getting a new (better) camera, about being in pictures of nearly every reKindle event, about being interviewed by media, and about meeting and greeting other kids and donors who recognized her from online: "Whenever we have to like pick up [donations], like I always go there and [say] 'Hi' and stuff because like I guess I'm super important" (Interview, 1-7-15). When she said "super important" to me, Kaylee laughed in bewilderment, as if even she is surprised that being a kid and being "super important" happen together. Indeed, we know that although young people are "in public" online in droves, only the minority get to "be public" (Boyd, 2014), or as Kaylee puts it, to be "super important." Literacy education in digital delivery might do something to address this inequity.

Revisiting the three senses of reKindle's compagnie above, the following implications for teaching digital delivery are suggested:

1. Inviting and keeping good company. Like Chris, educators might safely scaffold writing in social media. Like Kaylee, young writers could learn side-by-side with us how to assemble distant others through event-driven cycles that request, represent, and express gratitude for participation. Practicing writing in punctuated time, we might learn to perform it responsively and rhythmically; that is, we might practice writing more like dancing: by inviting different partners, smiling, holding on, moving together, and thanking them when the music stops. Inquiry and practice in the design of spreadable, compact, digital media is suggested. In addition to daily, ongoing performances, we might periodically fold our relations and accomplishments into products that can serve as digital, spreadable spokesthings on our behalf.

2. Performing together. Like Chris, we might scaffold young learners' forays into social media by venturing out into public online together: staying side-by-side, staying safe, and seeing what we can learn. Sitting next to his daughter in the living room, Chris provided Kaylee entrée into a wider social world than her friends-only Instagram, trivia games, and browsing YouTube (see Chapter 3). Further, by making reKindle "a thing" on Facebook for Kaylee, Chris held what they were doing steady in artifacts: digital collections displaying ongoing reading, writing, and discussion.

As literacy educators, we might notice that Chris was creating a kind of literacy environment for his daughter to learn in. What might we include in high-quality digital literacy environments for children in schools? Chris' model would suggest that important things to include were: text that represent diverse media and genres, texts from near and far, texts that spread out over time and texts that fold time, texts that invite and display wide participation, etc. Moving forward, we might extend existing tools for assessing the qualities of classroom print environments that promote literacy learning (e.g., Hoffman, Sailors, Duffy, & Beretvas, 2004; Maloch, Hoffman & Patterson, 2004); we could adapt these into future studies of the qualities of post-print environments that promote literacy learning.

3. Speaking out. Like Chris, we as literacy educators might also like to give learners the opportunity to stand for something bigger than themselves. Kaylee experienced how reKindle developed a social media presence, a logo, and a standing archive of spokespersons and spokesthings that attracted others. Research suggests that at only a minority of children access these kinds of powerful, productive, participatory opportunities online, while one in three stops at the lowers levels of opportunity, using the internet to receive information only (as if it were a television (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). By opening our classroom doors more widely onto the world, more kids might see how they matter. Indeed, networked publics and a translation model of power suggest that we measure our success by who and what we have mobilized in the world. As such, writing for publics in classrooms would require that we not only expect to *make* writing, but to *make something of it* in the world.

On Circulation

reKindle's texts reached a staggering number of people through social media: 3,600 Facebook subscribers, 14,000 YouTube subscribers, and 3.8 million YouTube views of its videos (to date). Though we cannot know whether or how all these others circulated reKindle, I located steady circulation pathways in certain genres, spokespersons, and spokesthings.

Turning again to our exemplar of "Volunteering in Phoenix" (reKindle, 2015, January 5), we can see how reKindle circulated. Recall the opening images of Kaylee and Chris on a mission. Recall the backpack drive and street walk. Recall the way the camera's images folded everything into a shareable montage. These were the genres that routinely attracted people to take up and perform reKindle's mission: the *origin story*, the *backpack drive*, and the *montage*.

I observed these genres taken up in seven different re-enactments of reKindle elsewhere in the world. For example, a family in Canada who inspired by reKindle's video of "Children Helping Homeless" (reKindle, 2014, August 19) decided to do their own "We Got Your Back" drive at the same time as reKindle Christmas in Phoenix. Like reKindle, they made a Facebook event page that started with an origin story (featuring Chris and Kaylee) and then carried on over time with preparations, a street walk, a group photo, and finally a moving montage video. In another example, on the same day as reKindle Christmas, three co-workers in the Philippines were inspired by a reKindle video called "The Most Inspiring Video of

All Time! Thanks Internet!" (reKindle, 2014, July 29). In response to the video, the co-workers hosted a backpack event for poor children in their city, followed by a street walk afterward to feed the homeless. Following reKindle's model, they collected resources over time by calling up others to help, assembled backpacks, shared pictures, and planned a montage video "for spreading the inspiration to others… and [to] remind other people that we can help in any way possible, with the little that we have" (Stephanie Chua, Interview, 1-9-15). Several corporations also took up these standard genres. For example, one web-based company that hosted an "I Got Your Back" Backpack drive also produced a professional-quality montage to share with media. True to form, their video moved from an interview with Chris telling reKindle's origin story, to preparations for the event, and to the street walk. As did others who took up reKindle, the company spokesman in the video aligns reKindle's mission with their local mission, transforming reKindle as it travelled.

As suggested by this corporate example, over time reKindle recruited spokespersons that represented more and more people and things. These included people whose professional expertise was in producing and distributing spreadable media, many of whom would interview Chris and Kaylee. To illustrate these points, we can follow this corporate example a bit further over time. One day, the corporate spokesman promoted the reKindle in an interview on local TV news. The TV news then re-represented reKindle by sharing the interview on TV and online, spreading the word to many viewers and readers. Then one the corporation's glossy event photo was re-distributed by *The Huffington Post*, one of the largest social media news sites in the world (see Appendix A, referencing its 78 million visitors per month). This media giant also led with reKindle's origin story: "How One Viral Video Inspired This 11-Year-Old Girl to Help Hundreds of Homeless People" (Hall, 2014). They also folded in reKindle's spreadable media and many other well-connected spokespersons. Just this one short blog post embedded reKindle's montage videos, linked to corporate sponsors, linked to other news media sharing the story, and even pictured of Kaylee and Chris posing with a smiling TV anchorperson.

reKindle proliferated through its relations with professionals like these, whose expertise lie in displaying connections in spreadable media. The board of directors they've put together for their impending 501(c)3 charity are drawn from the upper echelon of social media marketers (Chris, 12-19-14). reKindle's newest partners also include professionals who will produce and spread digital media on behalf of reKindle. These include: a global food corporation, who will feature reKindle in their public relations campaigns; an accomplished TV producer and a commercial videographer, who will help create reKindle's next video series; a journalist, who now writes as reKindle on their Facebook page; and graphic designers, who are making small, shareable posters that will push reKindle's invitations on Facebook ever further and faster as part of its newest initiative: "reKindle365."

What Might This Have To Do With Writing Instruction?

These findings can invite us to consider some things we might teach about digital delivery and why we should do so. Here are a couple of things we might do:

1. Think 'compact.' The circulation of compact, spreadable media (immutable mobiles) invites us to expand our teaching to include the study and practice of short, spreadable genres. Imagine young writers practicing the origin story: a short vignette that introduces their inspiration and mission in a quick, memorable way to strangers. Or, imagine young writers who create templates for processes (like the backpack drive) that are revised as they see how people take them up. Or, imagine young writers who develop digital posters or montage videos to practice conveying messages visually, quickly, and routinely, and linking these through social media to audiences who transform them. Though the genres that circulate well may be ever-changing, we can inquire with our students into the features of texts that travel especially well online today and teach how to use them as mentor texts for writing.

2. It's important to deliver. These findings suggest why it is important that we teach digital delivery. reKindle's power was increased in relation to people who were experts in field related to in digital delivery: web marketing, search engine optimization, digital graphic design, videography, social media news, web-based journalism, etc. This evidence supports the contention of Jenkins et al. (2006) that educational and economic opportunities are now linked to participation in networked publics; and, by extension, that inequitable access to participation in networked publics is now an issue of social justice. By teaching digital delivery, we might begin to address these inequities.

On (De|Re)Stabilization

The "good company" described above helped to stabilize reKindle as a network public, performing predictable cycles of compagnie. But the problem with these cycles was that no one in particular (except Chris and Kaylee) routinely repeated them. As such, it was necessary for reKindle to constantly recruit the attention of new performers. Paradoxically, it gained this kind stability not from inviting its "good company" but from inviting "mayhem". Following the metaphor a bit further, imagine the differences between these kinds of company: hosting an open house with a guided tour scheduled for 2:00pm on Saturday; versus directing traffic out front as droves of people let themselves in your door at all hours of the day and night, toting their food, blankets, and clothing along with them. In fact, this is how "Volunteering in Phoenix" ends. Returning a final time to this video, its end illustrates how reKindle was (de)stabilized by this alternative, mayhem variety of circulation.

Un-Compagnie 1: The Emergency

Recall the final scenes of "Volunteering in Phoenix". Gone were the sunlit reKindlers marching with clear intention down the sidewalk with backpacks and stockings. The camera now films a dark night. At a wide angle, it shows a parking lot strewn with bodies, blankets on the ground in every direction, supplies piled up, and slices of pizza being passed hand-to-hand in the shadows of the street lights. The overflow homeless shelter had been shut down due to budget cuts, and hundreds of homeless were sleeping on the ground in freezing temperatures. Responding to the emergency, reKindle's event page invited people to help pass out pizza to the homeless that night, and to bring plates, drinks, and cameras.

However, instead of being localized to reKindle's Facebook subscribers, someone shared the event page on a community Facebook page called SwipSwap, and from there it proliferated through innumerable shares on Facebook and around the web. Commenting on reKindle's event page, hundreds of people coordinated over the next 48 hours to delivery each other and each other's things to the corner of 12th and Madison. They started with the plan, coordinating the delivery of food and utensils:

- "I would love to help out if I can get a ride. My car will be in the shop overnight. I'm at 24th St. and Camelback. I have some plates, cups and utensils." (Layne ItDown, 2015)

Rapidly the variety of foods expanded:

- "I am in Pinal County… If someone wants to pick up I have 13 quarts Meyenberg refrigerated pasteurized goat's milk… I can also add some canned beans with a good freshness date." (Gelber, 2015)

And the other things started pouring in from all over the valley and even from other states:

- "I just cleaned out our coat closet and have coats..." (Schriener, 2015)

- "I have a few blankets and Men boots size 9… I also have a ton of totes with lids. Can u use those to store there [sic] things?" (Cook, 2015)
- "I'm in Texas but am happy to next day ship some stuff. What address is good?" (Estes, 2015)

Soon, they improvised a distribution systems, creating a standing list on the Facebook page of physical addresses distributed geographically where people could drop off items for others to deliver. Photos of progress were shared moment-to-moment (Figure 6.4):

Figure 6.4. Things assembling in reKindle's emergency compagnie.

"Shannon St. DROP off is doing well."

"WOW!!! TALK ABOUT COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION!!!
Emptied my porch two hours ago, came home to this!!""

Clearly, this was not a typical reKindle event. As shown in Table 6.3, reKindle abandoned its usual compagnie features and instead delivered in emergency, hand-to-hand, in a mob at one location. Though Chris sometimes tried to manage the Facebook event pages, the comments quickly piled up like the bags piling up in these photos, juxtaposing all different people, things, and goals.

Table 6.3

reKindle's Typical Compagnie v. Emergency Compagnie

Event Elements	Typical Compagnie	Emergency Compagnie
Timing:	Planned in advance	Immediate action
Container:	Collected in backpacks	Loose, hand-to-hand
Collection :	One drop-off location	Many drop-off locations
Delivery:	Street walk	Mob at one site
Goal:	reKindle's mission	Diverse goals
On site volunteers:	Up to ~25	Hundreds
Online circulation:	reKindle's Facebook page	Community Facebook page
Online interaction:	reKindle-to-participants	Participants-to-participants
Text trajectory:	Unifying (e.g., template)	Juxtaposing (e.g., comments)

The result was what Chris called "beautiful mayhem;" it was successful in serving the homeless but "it got messy" (Interview, 2-17-15). On site, Chris learned that the people in this parking lot were fed by the adjacent homeless shelter but were sheltered outside due to criminal histories, sex offenses, drugs, communicable illnesses, etc. As a representative of the homeless shelter and police explained to Chris, these conditions made the event potentially hazardous for reKindlers, and especially inappropriate for children. Startled, Chris concluded the event on site and issued an urgent safety update on Facebook (Interview, 2-17-15).

In the aftermath, reKindle cleaned up the mess in the parking lot and online. They made plans to visit and learn from the homeless shelter, in order to collaborate more in the future. And they repaired their stable circulation pathways: the mission, the template of roles, and montage. Chris posted on Facebook:

> REKINDLE VOLUNTEER NEEDS:
>
> Hey reKindlers! If you would like to help us further our cause of inspiring kindness across the world, there are so many areas that we need help in! If any of these roles sounds like something that you or somebody you know could help in, contact us to let us know! (reKindle, 2015, January 6)

Here, reKindle restated its mission and invited participants into roles that would support its more typical compagnies:

- Social Media Managers (to help us manage all our social media channels!)
- Community Leaders (to help run drives across the valley and across the country!)
- Volunteer Coordinator (to help make sure our volunteers are be
- Outreach Specialists (to reach out to businesses, individuals, and press on our behalf)
- Administrative Specialist (to help keep the ship running)
- Content Producers (to keep pumping out inspiring stories!)

- Graphic Designers (to design shirts, web and print media, etc.)
- WordPress Developers (to help build out reKindle.org)
- Video Editors (to keep making inspiring videos)
- Photographers (to take pictures that inspire more people to do good in the world!)
- Grant Writers (to help us stay afloat while we grow!)
- Tax Specialist (to help us with the 501c3 and end of year stuff!)
- Legal Counsel (to make sure we are doing everything properly)
- Donation Coordinator (to manage the flow of donations in and out!)
- (reKindle, 2015, January 6)

The response was again overwhelming, effectively harnessing the attention of its new friends into reKindle's service. Then, it returned to the montage: true to form, reKindle folded everyone and everything up neatly into a 'heart-warming,' shareable, stabilizing montage ("Volunteering in Phoenix").

Un-Compagnie 2: Viral Videos On YouTube

Publics are inherently unstable. They forego the stability of the known audience, always including the opening for participation from anyone (Warner, 2002). As such, it seems quite a feat that reKindle achieved any stability at all, much less the kind of stability necessary to create the kind of "standing set of translations" necessary to coordinate net work (Spinuzzi, 2008, p. 88). But in fact, reKindle did find some stabilities. In this section, I explain where and how. My analysis revealed that stabilities in reKindle's network were associated with two contrasting, yet interdependent, kinds of translation performances. I call these campaigns and un-campaigns. As discussed above, reKindle campaigns were typically inscribed on Facebook, where recurring, supportive allies were brought together on a timeline archiving their participation. These campaigns were often enacted similarly; that is, as goal-oriented, time-bound relations among allies with a shared goal. Generally, their trajectories of circulation were unifying and standardizing, as they drew action and attention to common event sites, and as they drew arrays of inscriptions into ever-more immutable mobiles, like the template and montage video. Above, I argue that these recurring enactments stabilized reKindle as a networked public, offering pathways for participation and circulation. But this stability was partial and temporary.

In actuality, uptake was displayed in fits and starts, scattered over its Facebook timeline. Backpack drives were performed by many people, but were only very rarely re-performed by any of those people in particular (to my knowledge) except for Kaylee and Chris. Perhaps this is the trouble with the temporality of any event cycle. After one cycle, you can stop and choose if you'll start again. It seems cycles are both good and bad when it comes to keeping attention. reKindle's campaigns were good at reliably funneling attention and performances in similar directions to mobilize allies, but the attention of these allies was subject to change from cycle to cycle. As such, becoming a standing set of transformations required that reKindle constantly recruit new allies to repeat these performance cycles. For this, it turned from campaigns to un-campaigns.

By contract, un-campaigns were not campaigns at all. They were translations that broke pattern noticeably from the typical campaign pattern. The majority of these un-campaigns (three out of four) came out of reKindle's alliance with YouTube and, more specifically, with YouTube's favorite genre, the viral video. To give some perspective on how transformative these were, here are some numbers: A typical reKindle campaign montage video received between 700-7,500 views, and averaged 6 comments per video. By contrast, the three videos that broke pattern collectively received about 4,000,000 views and 3,500 comments. Analysis of these videos and their comments revealed contrasting enactments of translation; Table 6.4 summarizes these contrasts.

Table 6.4

Translation in reKindle's Compagnie vs. Un-Compagnie on YouTube

Elements:	Typical Compagnie	Un-Compagnie on YouTube
Participants:	Facebook friends	Anonymous aliases
Continuity of Participants:	Faithful returners	One-time visitors
Number of Participants	Hundreds	Millions
Summing Up:	Shares per post (few)	Total views (millions)
Types of Comments:	Pragmatic, friendly	Emotional, polarizing
Goal Orientation:	reKindle's goals	Diverse, competing goals
Timing:	Punctuated campaigns	Unpunctuated flows
Trajectory of Action:	Coordinated events	Constant conversation
Text Trajectory:	Unifying & standardizing	Juxtaposing & fragmenting
Trajectory of Attention:	Funneling	Dispersing
Uptake:	Intermittent, random	Constant, reliable

To explicate these differences, I briefly describe one of these videos next.

"**Homeless Man Cries Tears of Joy**." In contrast to the typical montage campaign video where Chris and Kaylee and other volunteers assembled backpacks and then distributed them along with hugs and high-fives, "Homeless Man Cries Tears of Joy" (reKindle, 2014, July 28) presented a single scene of interaction: a conversation. Here, I narrate the video:

> A well-dressed middle-aged white man, a reKindler, leans down toward Albert, an older black man, sitting on the sidewalk on a busy city street as other pedestrians pass by. The reKindler is leaning down in front of Albert, showing him that it contains wipes and socks and things. Albert starts a conversation about his 66th birthday today, and tells a story about always seeing a show (movie) on his birthday. In response, the reKindler spontaneously reaches into his pocket and pulls out a roll of bills, handing

> some to Albert to go see his movie. Albert reaches up to shake his hand, the reKindler leans down and gives him a long hug, patting his back while Albert cries in thanks, “Can’t nobody tell me God ain’t good.” After move hugging and more thanking the mean and blessing them, Albert says, “I knew God was gonna send me somebody! I knew it. Thanks, guys!”

To date, this video has gotten 3.3 million views on YouTube, and 3,346 comments. In analysis, I found reKindle was translated or circulated in a very different way with viral videos similar to this than I’d seen on Facebook in reKindle’s more orchestrated campaigns.

Participants went by screen names that made them relatively anonymous. They were almost all one-time visitors and commenters. Attention was dispersed across many topics. The main genres were comments and arguments, and these were really quite fragmenting and polarizing. While most had positive responses related to giving and inspiration and God, critiques were very common. People debated whether this kind of video was self-serving, sometimes rebuking it on biblical grounds. People debated about whether it was good or bad to give homeless people money. People worried that the video makers were profiting off the homeless. But most often, people wanted to debate about God. Should Albert thank God or humans? Is there a God? Should atheists be more accepting of people who are religious? It’s not possible here to understate how far afield from reKindle’s goals that these topics were (in fact, reKindle intentionally refuses religious affiliation in order to include the most diverse participation possible).

Clearly, this video was not ANT’s “immutable” mobile. To add to the mélange, comments were displayed in one long scroll of comments and replies, juxtaposed in screen after screen. By contrast to campaigns, they were not neatly summed up. Nor were they headed to any particular, coordinated point or event. Instead, the un-campaign was circular in its trajectory, a constant conversation, endlessly debated. In fact, nine months after its publication, this video continues to receive many new comments daily, both supportive and contentious.

It is this last point that mattered most to stabilizing reKindle as a networked public: that people talked on and on and on. As the number of views of the video grew so, too, did its promotion by YouTube (e.g., features, auto-plays, and recommendations), social media news outlets, and search engines like Google that prioritize and promote popular content. In this way, these technologies acted as allies of reKindle, creating a standing set of translations in relation to the video. Even if YouTube recruited viewers whose interests were far different than those of reKindle, it didn't betray reKindle; because YouTube summons all views and comments positive or negative equally. That is, what mattered was not the kind of comments so much as the number of them. More views summon more views on YouTube; just as ANT would notice, networks get stronger and stronger the more allies they recruit (Latour, 1986a). Though the video was posted nine months ago, it continues to receive comments daily. It is *the* text among reKindle's texts, the spark that renews attention and re-representations. As Chris explained to me, "That viral video, the Albert video, is the thing. It's the fuel for the fire" (Interview, 12-19-14). From there, people come to reKindle's website, YouTube page, and Facebook page. They call and they email. Attention is constantly inbound: "It just happens now." "People just hit us up." (Interview, 12-19-14). Thus Chris' role shifted from pushing content to doing what he happily called "trying to manage this mayhem" (Interview, 2-17-15).

As described above, Chris seemed to revel in controversy, because it gets publicity. Kaylee, too, was learning over her dad's shoulder, to focus on the positive comments and ignore the mean ones. In response to controversies, reKindle either let them go or stepped in to repair. In the latter instances, this was accomplished by inviting participation, recalling reKindle's origin story and

Kaylee's inspiration, recalling reKindle's mission and delivery template-- the very same genres that stabilized reKindle's campaigns.

Taken together, reKindle's campaigns and un-campaigns showed two different pathways along which reKindle's texts circulated. These pathways didn't just co-exist, they depended upon one another. reKindle's viral videos un-campaigns and their flows of comments around a mutable mobile were faithful agents of interessement, bringing in a constant flow of attention useful in the recruitment of new allies. At the same time, the fragmentation and oppositions associated with these un-compagnies were answered by the steady, immutable mobiles of the campaign, faithfully enrolling allies toward a common goal. In sum, the instabilities of one circulation pathway were answered by the stabilities of the other. Together, these allowed reKindle to be enacted as a networked public whose texts, in their concatenation over time, could coordinate net work around the world.

What Might This Have To Do With Writing Instruction?

Two kinds of company were good for reKindle's stability: the company they trusted to predictably perform campaigns, and the company they risked in order to generate mayhem. Routines stabilized the mayhem, while the mayhem stabilized the routines by recruiting more people to perform them. Applying these findings to education, we might consider teaching how risk and trust are effectively and safely performed in networked publics. reKindle's case supports these practices for educators:

1. Staying on point with safety. Clearly, we must remain mindful of potential dangers for children in public spaces. We must be mindful when we put children's texts "out there," tracking their circulation and intervening when necessary. We must also assess risks, especially when networked publics shift activity from online to offline (if we choose to do that). For example, I don't use this study to recommend that kids "do reKindle" by going out on the streets with homeless people, for one, because this study doesn't assess the safety of that practice. However, I can recommend that we guide children's learning about risk and safety, just as we are accustomed to doing any time we take our classes out into the world. As we do on field trips, we can ask for permission in advance. We can invite trusted adults to chaperone. We can stay together and venture out. We can have fun and return safely.

2. Welcoming "beautiful mayhem." As Chris explained about reKindle events, bringing lots of things and people together was welcome chaos:

> Everything is always everywhere. It never goes the way it's supposed to go… there's basically nonstop emergencies all day that I have to tend to. But it's fun! It's crazy. People get nuts. They love it, and we're going to keep doing it! (Interview, 12-19-14).

This mindset toward openness and adaptation is perhaps something we are already well-positioned to teach as educators accustomed to large groups and community-based events. With our students, we might purposefully invite participation from wider circles online, too, and welcome the tensions as generative learning opportunities.

3. Building trust. Finally, like reKindle, we might invite writers to practice trust-building online. For example, we might study and perform writing routines in social media that make individuals or groups seem trustworthy, like reKindle's Facebook timeline, which acted as a kind of digital portfolio. These familiar spaces might then give us the confidence and credential we need to negotiate the ups and downs and harness what the wider world has to offer.

PART III: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Chapter 7: Summary, Discussion, and Implications

At the outset of this study, I argued that there are new things to know and teach about writing today. I drew on others' points that writing is becoming ever-more distributed, digital, ad hoc, and challenging, as we coordinate and negotiate work in an information economy outside of the stable, modular work structures associated with an industrial economy (e.g., Spinuzzi, 2007; Swarts, 2011). I called for our attention to this shift in writing for literacy researchers, teachers, and learners, as future prospects for all of us will rise or fall in relation to our understanding and practice of networked public discourse. As such, I planned this investigation to go outside of our classrooms writing instruction, far afield and online, in order to broaden our knowledge base about young writers and their powerful networked publics.

Having now described three cases of networked publics at length, this final chapter will wrap up what has been found more squarely in order to bring it back to inform our thinking and practice in literacy education and research. For the final time, it revisits our three questions on *distribution*, *circulation*, and *(de|re)stabilization*. For each question, a summary of cross-case findings is presented, and followed by a discussion of what these findings contribute to our current knowledge base regarding young writers and their networked public participation. This chapter concludes with some implications of this investigation for future inquiry and innovation in literacy teaching and research.

On Distribution: Summary of Findings Across Cases

The first strand of this investigation focused on distribution. It was guided by this question: *How did young writers distribute texts in such a way that they summoned and maintained a networked public?* To *distribute* was understood as performing both technical and social knowledge of writing. As Porter (2009) suggests of digital delivery, it involves the art (techne) of both technological and ethical decision-making, both "*productive* knowledge about making and *practical* knowledge about doing" (p. 220). I extended Porter's notion of delivery to mean decisions made not just at the time of creating a particular text, but also decisions made within discourse as it is exchanged over time. Here, I was compelled by Brooke's (2009) definition of digital delivery as *performance,* as encompassing both the idea of delivery as involving the circulation of a digital object (as we deliver pizzas, in Brooke's example) but also as involving the circulation of discourse more broadly (outside of a direct object). The latter point fit well with the dialogic exchanges I observed during data collection. I came to realize that often the texts in question were not unified objects (like blog posts), but also bits of small texts surrounding those larger texts that might be spread out in space and time from each other.

Realizing that texts distributed were so many in number, I made a similar turn as Spinuzzi (2012) when he realized in data collection that it wasn't a single text, but associated kinds of texts, that made sense to follow—as "people don't just read one text at a time. In fact they string together lots of texts, sometimes surprisingly large gobs of wildly heterogeneous texts, related in different ways" (para. 14). Borrowing this methodological solution, I began focusing more on recurring distribution by noting recurring text types and how they were enacted (genres). In the end, then, I looked at how networked publics were summoned and became powerful by observing the ways young writers were performing distribution by making texts, interacting, and performing genres in situ. Drawing these ideas about distribution into the theories that guided this study, I analyzed from the standpoint of ANT how authors used texts to suggest or perform *translations* (Callon, 1986) that brought together diverse interests; and from the standpoint of publics, I analyzed distributions as ongoing discursive performances of call-and-response intended to invite others' participation.

Table 7.1 below shows a synthesis of this study's findings on distribution. It names the commonalities I found in the technical and social performance of distribution across the cases. Taken together, this data yielded the following broad finding concerning distribution: *Young writers and their parents initiated and sustained relations through distribution practices that invited the trust of others*. By inviting trust, I mean they were oriented toward building others' confidence in these networked publics and their desire to continue to connect with them. The final column in Table 7.1 reveals how the distribution strategies service trust-building; texts were delivered as displays of *interest*, *appreciation*, *reliability*, *service*, *credibility*, and r*esponsiveness*.

Table 7.1

Overview of Findings on Distribution

Research Question 1: How did young writers distribute texts in such a way that they summoned and maintained a networked public?					
	Commonalities in Distribution	**Erik**	**Matt**	**Kaylee & Chris**	**Built Trust by Showing:**
1	Focus on others & their needs	• Seeking out & replying to other blogs • Projecting needs of others	• Following & replying to other twitter accounts • Commentaries	• Contributing to a 'movement' on YouTube • Promoting others' projects on Facebook	Interest
2	Positive tone	Thankful & respectful	Enthusiastic & positive 'Mattitude'	Inspired & complimentary	Appreciation
3	Punctual response	• Weekly schedule • Daily correspondence	• In-season & off-season regular event coverage • Frequent correspondence	• Regular event cycles • Frequent correspondence	Reliability
4	Routines of Re-Representation	• Book review request & rating system • Book reviews • Book tours • Comments to readers • Logo	• Commentaries • Experiences • Interviews • Promotions • Logo & t-shirt	• Mission statement & call to action • Event preparations & mobilization • Thank-yous • Logo & t-shirt	Service
5	Flexible genres	Genres of recommendation: • Endorsement • Evaluation • Care	Genres of appreciation: • Approval • Gratitude • Promotion	Genres of compagnie: • Coordination • Collaboration • Promotion	Responsive-ness
6	Assemblies of references	• Interview series on YouTube • Map-of-world widget • Reviewer profile|rank on Amazon.com	• Photos • Tweeting re: interaction • Accomplishment list & slideshow • Retrospective posts	Montage videos on YouTube	Credibility

Reviewing the table in more depth, we can see how distribution performances served to build trust. Across the board, one of the first important moves writers made in audience-building was to notice others right from the start (see Row 1, Table 7.1). Not '*Look here!*' or '*Look at me!*' first, as we might think first when we imagine 'publishing' a text and trying to get others to notice it. Rather, it was: *'Here you are!' and* '*Look at you!*' As we've seen, they would seek out bloggers who shared their interests, or people they admired on Twitter, or they would respond to what other YouTubers were doing. By doing these things, they began to envision a potential audience and to anticipate what their needs might be. Here, the trust move was to signal *interest* in others; as if to say: *Among all others on the internet, I noticed you and your writing, and I want you to know that.* Also in these early responses, a tone was set that we've seen ran through the cases in how these kids communicated to others: always positive, grateful, and optimistic (see Row 2, Table 7.1). Here was the second trust-building move in action: a signal of *appreciation* for others—as if to say: *Whatever you're doing, I like it! Or, there is something about it that I like. Let me tell you about what that is… And thank you for sharing!* In addition, these writers established habits and schedules for punctual response to others online—a move that signaled their *reliability* (see Row 3, Table 7.1). The message of that movement seemed to be: *I hear you today, and I'll be back tomorrow too. I can't wait to see what you'll do or say next.*

These qualities of participatory, positive, punctual interactivity proved to be so attractive to others, as I learned in interviews; and it is perhaps easy to see why here. Who wouldn't like to arrive at their desk with fans waiting, to say *You are so interesting! I'm so excited about what you're writing! I can't wait to see what you'll do next!* It wasn't empty flattery, or even "strategic" (I abandoned that word to describe distribution during data collection when I realized the viewpoints of these children). Their enthusiasm about meeting the world for the first time was genuine.

Indeed, to see how the world looked through these enthusiastic eyes proved to be genuinely attractive to adults too.

In addition to this interactivity, young writers built trust by writing as an act of service. As the lens of translation revealed, young writers in these cases would perform and display predictable routines that served the needs of others; they re-represented and mobilized other's books, products, good deed, etc. (see Row 4, Table 7.1). These routines for putting others on display were performed so consistently —even sometimes spelled out in a set of instructions, as in Erik's case—that any new contact would know right away what to expect from him should they offer up their own book, interview, photo, video, etc. into his composing hands.

Here, the trust signal was to show predictable *service* to others: *This is what you can expect from me when I write about you or your project. No surprises here*. Relatedly, the genres these writers performed could be used flexibly to meet the needs of multiple audiences (see Row 5, Table 7.1). Here, the trust signal was to show *responsiveness* to diverse interests—as if to say: *We'll make this work for you.* Then, finally, they would assemble their references. They would collect texts that showed their history of re-representing others. As we've seen, these were often aggregated (deflated) into things; for example, a map showing readers all over the world, or a list of famous people interviewed, or a montage of great moments with tons of volunteers working with them (see Row 6, Table 7.1). Here, the signal was to show *credibility* by demonstrating a kind of distributed trust across a wide world of people and things (see also Warnick, 2004). The implicit message was: *All of these people, even famous people, have supported my re-representing their texts. They are happy, and so am I. And so will you be.*

This trust-building also extended to relating well with technologies. As Kaylee's dad (a former social media marketing executive) explained to me, trust was also important to search engines like Google when they decided what sites to promote or rank higher when people search for terms: “Trust [is] probably the overarching, number one thing. Google has gotten a lot smarter on who to trust, and who not to trust” (Chris, Interview, 12-19-14). As such, he noted that companies spend a good deal of money on content writers, especially to get ones who are well known and whose writing will endorse a product of a company. So trust-building with people in these ways also created trust-building with important things like search engines—things all users of the internet trust in daily practice to suggest which links are most important to go to first.

Discussion of Distribution

How do these findings about distribution and trust relate to our current understandings of writing and young writers? First, I’ll describe what these findings confirm and extend in the existing literature, and then what they contradict and add anew.

On one hand, this is the oldest finding in the history of literacy. As Gee and Hayes (2011) remind us, even Plato—one of the earliest writers in Western civilization—was bothered about trust (see Plato’s *Phaedrus*, c.a. 370 BCE|1892). He, too, worried about writing at a distance—getting away from its authors, who might not be there to interpret it (correctly), or that writing couldn’t interrogated like a person, or that people might trust them (and the experts and institutions that spoke through them) rather than their own experience. In response to writing came experts to interpret texts, and institutions to certify those experts, but no end to writing’s “massive trust issue” (p. 48). As these authors point out, it’s only gotten worse. With the rise of the internet and a digital social formation, the authority of our experts and institutions is waning, while the amateurs’ star rises again as it did in days past in cultures of orality. In the broader area of scholarship on digital culture, the capacity to build trust is recognized as essential to thriving in networked environments (e.g., Rainie & Wellman, 2012; Rheingold, 2012). Similarly, studies of technical writing in the workplace reach similar conclusions about trust: that writing for work in the knowledge economy's distributed communication landscape is as much about moving people as it is about moving information (Swarts, 2011); and knowing how to develop trust is essential to the negotiation and coordination necessary for a workplace where a writer might be working with anyone on any given day (Spinuzzi, 2008). For writers in distributed networks, "trust becomes an ongoing project" (Spinuzzi, 2007, p. 271).

This study offers further evidence of how trust-building is performed in networked written communication generally, while also showing that negotiation of trust in distributed networks is not only a part of adult's work, but now also part of young writer's everyday experience. So on the one hand this isn't new news: trust matters in writing—and especially in distributed networked writing. But it is new to think about trust-building as something we'd want to develop in *children* online. As we've seen in the introductory matter to this study, when we think about children online, we tend to think about trust as a safety problem. The point is to teach them to *withhold their trust*—as exemplified by these researchers' conclusions about children who felt people online were "not dangerous"—"Children's responses demonstrate naïveté and trust which is likely to place them in jeopardy if they are not educated to recognize the risk" (Ey & Cupit, 2011, p. 63). Some mixed-methods studies have suggested age is the main limitation to children's social understanding of the internet—"it is not easy for young minds to figure out how complex the internet really is" (Yan 2005; 2006, p. 419; 2009). The findings of the current investigation complicate this existing research in two ways. First, it invites a more complex understanding of trust and writing online—one that is inclusive of safety (all children and parents took safety seriously); but it also suggests that it's only the first step. In this study, we see young writers who are advanced internet users *purposefully reaching out to earn the trust of others*. Secondly, it contradicts the suggestion that children's young minds are the source of their limited social understanding of the internet; in this study, I saw that children clearly had the capacity to demonstrate complex social understandings about the internet when given access and scaffolding to do so.

The current study's findings also echo others who've studied children's online public writing. Though the studies are few in number, revisiting this body of research discussed in Chapter 2 we can see the echoes of the importance of trust in positive examples of children's relationship-building with new people online. In Marsh's (2011) study, for example, openness to making new friends was associated with increases in their social and cultural capital. Others refer to this phenomenon as risk-taking (e.g., Carrington, 2008a; 2008b; 2012). The "risky explorers" identified in the EU Kids study (Livingstone et al., 2011, p. 40), for example, took on a wide range of activities with a lot of risk compared to other kids, but were unlikely to encounter upset or harm.

Similarly, in this dissertation study, no kids reported coming to harm on the internet, and rarely could they recall an upsetting incident. Even when they did, it was understood be an important learning event (for example, several children mentioned it was important to be okay with negative feedback or negative reviews of their books online, because they explained that you can't stop those and you can learn from them.) Perhaps this is a mindset schools will work to help children develop in the future; indeed, even now in studies of digital literacies, we as researchers and teachers begin to worry if a child isn't looking to make new friends online when given the opportunity (as in Marsh, 2011), or is hesitant to ask an online community for support (as in Kafai et al., 2010). In sum, the results of this study lend further support to existing research in literacy studies and internet studies that connect habits of openness to wider interaction with children's increased social understanding and opportunity online.

However, the findings in this study also push us to continue to shift our vocabulary into the language of possibility. For these families, the performance's emphasis was on *trust*, not risk. It was above-and-beyond safety. In fact, it was above-and-beyond even being willing to accept new friends if they request, to maybe t*rust someone new*. The world-building move that was so powerful was actually *to try to earn the trust of someone new*. This what a translation model—at least as I've interpreted it—makes evident: our power comes not from you, but from the hands of others who are motivated to lift you up (Latour, 1986a). In Erik's case, we described this effort to earn the trust of others with the word humility. In this conversation, we might consider related terms to describe this. We might call it *compassion*— a genuine interest in others. Or perhaps *humanity*—a sense of our commonality and connectedness. Or perhaps even *vulnerability*—an openness to receiving the world view of someone else. The latter term, especially, highlights how contrasting, even startling (to me), this finding is in comparison to what we've spent decades now thinking about in terms of protecting children from all vulnerabilities online. But here is what we've seen in these cases: The children's powerful networks relied on displays or texts specifically meant to attract and serve new people. They were display of interest, appreciation, service, responsiveness, and credibility. Distribution was thus not only a technical matter for them, as these findings suggest; distribution was a habit of mind for extending a hand into the world, and offering a warm greeting, like *I am interested in you. I appreciate you. I want to show others that I appreciate you. I can do what you need. You can trust me.*

On Circulation: Summary of Findings Across Cases

The second strand of this investigation focused on circulation. Its guiding questions were: *How and why did networked publics circulate young writers' texts?* Taking an ANT-ish perspective on circulation, I was curious about the alignment in interests that accompanies successful translation (as defined by Callon, 1986). Thus, my analysis in this strand identified the groups that came together in these networked publics and what concerns they shared. I was also interested in how these groups converged and mobilized—something that ANT notices often happens in relation to texts (see Callon, 1986; Latour, 1986b). Thus, my analysis in this strand also identified the particular genres of texts that groups circulated to keep networked publics going strong (following Spinuzzi, 2008).

Table 7.2 provides a synthesis of the findings this investigation yielded on circulation. Taken together, these could be summed up in the following broad finding: *Children's networked publics were mutually attractive to both grassroots and corporate participants, because they brought these other groups the constant renewal they needed in order to thrive.* The final column shows that networked publics were valuable sources of the things: *diversity, renewal, continuous regeneration, adaptation,* and *negotiation*. As we've seen, publics demand attention. Here, we can see that the networked publics' character of invigoration was something that people found attractive and valuable.

Table 7.2

Overview of Findings on Circulation

Research Question #2: How and why did networked publics circulate young writers' texts?					
	Commonalities in Circulation	**This Kid Reviews Books**	**Matt's Bats**	**reKindle**	**Circulated Because it Was a Source Of:**
1	They were attracted to common topic of interest. Began with grassroots groups, and then grew to include professional media and corporate groups.	**Grassroots:** • Readers • Authors • Independent publishers **Professional Media & Corporate:** • Traditional book publishers • Local newspaper • Amazon.com • Huffington Post	**Grassroots:** • Washington Nationals fans on Twitter • Baseball bloggers **Professional Media & Corporate:** • Local TV news • Professional baseball media • Corporate sponsors	**Grassroots:** • Individuals & families spreading 'worldwide movement' in social media **Professional Media & Corporate:** • News media • Creative media Professionals • Corporate sponsors	Diversity
2	Others were attracted to structured, steady source of content to publish online.	**Genres:** • Weekly book review • Blog hop endorsements • Interviews with Erik • Interviews of Erik • Book rating (5-point scale) • New release promotions, tours • Logo, t-shirt	**Genres:** • Twitter follows, hashtags, tweets • Interviews with Matt • Interviews of Matt • Featured & guest blog posts by matt • Product giveaways & promotion • Logo, t-shirt	**Genres:** • Backpack drive (individuals & corporations) • Backpack drive montage videos • Interviews of Chris & Kaylee • Daily digital posters • Product giveaways & promotion • Logo, t-shirt	Continuous regeneration

Table 7.2, cont.

Overview of Findings on Circulation

Research Question #2: How and why did networked publics circulate young writers' texts?					
	Common-alities in Circulation	**This Kid Reviews Books**	**Matt's Bats**	**reKindle**	**Circulated Because it Was a Source Of:**
3	Others were attracted to the "kid perspective."	**Examples:** • Kid's book review • Twitter hashtag: #ThisKid • Interviews & photos of Erik	**Examples:** • Fans promoted 'kid' view • Live and|or TV interviews of Matt • MLB Youth Pro designation	**Examples:** • Frequent publication of kid-initiated origin story • Interviews, photos, & video of Kaylee	Renewal
4	Others co-performed civic participation & commercial promotion.	**Genres of Recommendation:** • Endorsement • Evaluation • Care • The Write Chat interviews • Indie publishers' book tours • New release advance copies & giveaways	**Genres of Appreciation:** • Approval • Gratitude • Promotion • Holiday Gift Guide w/ giveaways to readers & charity	**Genres of Compagnie**: • Coordination • Collaboration • Promotion • Corporate sponsored drives & street walks	Adaptation & negotiation

A closer look at Table 7.2 shows the commonalities in who, how, and why these networked publics circulated. As shown in Row 1, within each of the three networked publics people shared a common topic of interest—books, baseball, or philanthropy; but they also represented different viewpoints on that topic of interest. In each case, the first to join were the grassroots groups—people like the reviewers, indie authors, and YouTubers. By grassroots, I mean they were voluntary participants who participated outside of institutional affiliations or job-related expectations. Over time, they were joined in each case by professional media and corporate groups—authors, publishers, booksellers, professional sports media people and websites, creative media producers, and sponsors marketing their commercial products. For these different kinds of groups, the networked publics offered a source of *diversity* in perspectives, giving them valuable contact with each other. For example, professional groups' participation could lend a feeling of creditability to amateurs' participations; while for professionals, these amateurs were also potential customers for their media or products.

The groups all also wanted participation. One way to do this was through having lots and lots of content—a never-ending supply of it—related to their topic interest. This was also an attractive feature of networked publics, as shown in Row 2. They had steady, ready sources of content to generate participation (e.g., interviews, backpack drives, and promotions), and they could uses these to generate further texts to circulate. They could even arrange to have the content delivered steadily: a review posted every Friday, a monthly newspaper column, a weekly guest blog, etc. The value of this was underscored by the fact that professional and corporate groups showed up in increasing numbers to participate. Notably, they were all in the business of publishing and they represented ever-larger institutions. Their specialty was taking up and spreading content for a profit (e.g., in books, pro blogs, social media, sports news, and local news). Networked publics provided a source for the *continuous regeneration* of content that these publishers thrived on.

Another attraction was that the content was coming from a kid's perspective. This finding is displayed in Row 3 of Table 7.2. As we've seen in the findings chapters, Erik's and Matt's age were a legitimate source of interest for people—like authors who wanted a kid's feedback, and fans who wanted to see baseball through the eyes of a kid again. Further, there was a common sense of the kid's experience as being a connection to the future of their craft or sport or cause. So the networked publics provided both a source of *renewal* on two counts: in perspective (as compared to adults) and in linking to a next generation, for carrying on the making or doing or buying in these groups' areas of interest.

It may have been the draw of *diversity*, *regeneration*, and *renewa*l that provoked these groups' openness to networked publics as sources of *adaptation* and *negotiation*. As shown in Row 4, circulating within these networked publics involved these groups in crossing into each other's territories—mingling civic participation with commercial promotion. Here are some examples: Famous authors being interviewed on the same kids' YouTube program as indie authors; Corporate products being promoted in a holiday gift guide, and then given away to fans and charity; and fan-created media that promoted a professional sports players, while the professional players reciprocated by supporting fan participation and charitable efforts. In sum, participation in these networked publics gave these groups contact with new and different perspectives that allowed them to be seen and promoted by more people.

Discussion of Circulation

How do these findings about circulation confirm, extend, and add to our current understandings of writing and young writers? Within literacy studies of children's public writing online, they offer confirming evidence to existing research. Though few in number to date, these studies continue to observe that children can be competent, legitimate participants in wider public networks online (Carrington, 2012; Marsh, 2012a), including fan communities (Curwood, 2013) and even amongst adults (Carrington, 2008a). In addition, these findings offer an interesting counterpoint to studies of children's participation in online networks for games. In the studies, researchers have observed that literacy environments are restrictive and severely limit children's opportunities for meaningful social connection (e.g., Black, 2010; Carrington & Hodgetts, 2010; Carrington, 2012). By contrast, children's interactions in public, open-to-anyone spaces in this study showed just the opposite: the children were given abundant opportunity to join as legitimate participants in social life—and even more, their writing was valued and eagerly sought after. Here, children weren't treated as naive innocents, but as being especially important because of their age and the perspective they could bring. These findings thus lend support to researchers' continuing attention to children's literacy practices in public sites online (e.g., Carrington, 2012; Marsh, 2012b) to appreciate a wider range of children's online activity that may contribute to their development differently than sites we've imagined for them.

These findings also echo research on digital and participatory culture more broadly. As Jenkins et al. (2013) describe in *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*, online communities involve increasingly complex relations between grassroots and commercial participants. This is because our new digital landscape for media production and circulation means that content doesn't only come from the top-down corporate level to circulate to mass audiences; it also increasingly gets circulated from the bottom-up, and businesses have increasingly recognized the need to appreciate and collaborate with a grassroots audience. Citizens and audiences increasingly are collaborators with mainstream corporate entities. In these cases, we see empirical examples of the “grassroots intermediaries” that Jenkins et al. (2013) describe: people who are widely trusted by their online communities, and as such, have become attractive to commercial entities that use these well-connected intermediaries to spread the word about their commercial brands and products (p. 227). This study shows that these intermediaries are also kids and families; they strategically opened up dialogue with companies in ways that married commercial and civic interests.

This reflects both the old and new in the history of writing. As Brandt (2001) observed about the history of literacy in America, it has always involved powerful sponsors—“agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (p. 19). In these cases, we see traces of what Brandt has describes as the legacy of writing sponsorship—rooted not in civic sponsorship (as was reading) but in commerce and craftsmanship: “Writing has always been less *for* good that it is *a* good” (Brandt, 2015, pp. 4-5; see also Brandt, 2001). With the rise of mass writing comes confrontation with “the gritty vocational heritage of writing and its association with work, competition, artisanship, commercialism, apprenticeship, performance, publicity—a heritage that… continues to catalyze the literacy experiences of writing-oriented youths, even as it remains muted in reading-dominant, school-based literacy instruction.” (Brandt, 2015, p. 127). In her recent study (2015) of rise of mass writing, Brandt’s observations of young adult and adult writers run parallel to what this study found. As Brandt found, writers and writing are recruited ever-more intensively in the knowledge economy, and along with the rise in digital communication, this has resulted in an “inevitable spillover into the leisure lives of young people, who are being invited by commercial interests to invest their scribal skills (as well as money and time) in online writing activity” (p. 3). In this study’s examples of overflow, we can appreciate how something similar was happening.

In addition to the presence of commercial sponsors, Brandt's study and this one both found evidence of writing society and writing-based literacy development that rested on: writers recruited to serve the development of other writers; writers oriented toward learning about and sustaining each other's writing lives; writers constantly evaluating other writers; and an understanding that the value of writing lies in its generatively (How much more writing would it generate? How many more writers could it interest?) Brandt (2001) also notes that sponsors compete to set the terms of literacy moving forward—ever-shifting standards that create potential vulnerabilities and turbulence in our literacies. The next section of findings also speaks to this point.

On (De|Re)Stabilization: Summary of Findings Across Cases

The third strand of this investigation focused on instabilities. It was guided by the following questions: *What were sources of instabilities in children's networked publics? How were those instabilities negotiated?* Here, my analysis focused on destabilizing *controversies* and stabilizing *negotiations*—following ANT's interests in how powerful networks get done and un-done as alliances are (re)negotiated.

Findings about instabilities across the cases are summarized in Table 7.3. As shown in Rows 1 and 2, instabilities commonly involved controversy between groups over what counted as quality. I also found instabilities commonly related to the networked publics' demanding nature, as they must always be opening up to new attention (Rows 3-4). Taken together, these findings about instabilities could be summed as follows: *Within networked publics, instabilities were related to conflicting standards for writing, conflicting ideas about who should profit from other writers, and ever-present demand to generate further interest and writing. Children and their parents negotiated these dilemmas by turning toward heterogeneity in their writing perspectives and partnerships.* The final column in

Table 7.3 shows how children and parents embraced heterogeneity to address the trouble of keeping up their publics; they did so by: *appreciating diversity in participation*, *promoting the common good*, *embracing "beautiful mayhem,"* and *developing partnerships*.

Table 7.3

Overview of Findings on (De|Re)Stabilization

Research Question #3: What were sources of instabilities in young writers' networked publics? How were those instabilities negotiated?					
	Common Instabilities	**This Kid Reviews Books**	**Matt's Bats**	**reKindle**	**Repaired to Heterogeneity By:**
1	Professional and grassroots groups have different standards for quality , with the former often being skeptical of the latter	**Destabilizing:** Traditional publishers v. self-publishers Differ In: • Standards for editing • Ideas of what 'publishing' means • Values on inclusion/exclusion	**Destabilizing:** Traditional journalists v. fans differ in: • Standards for journalism (bias) • Social guidelines for press conduct	**Destabilizing:** Planful v. impromptu social welfare differ in: • Standards for meaningful service • Standards for safety & screening	Appreciating diversity in participation (professional & grassroots)
2	Grassroots and commercial groups have different ideas about profit, with the former often being skeptical of the latter	**Destabilizing:** • Offers of payment or gifts for review • Advertisements **Restabilizing:** • Reviews not for sale • Transparency about gifts • Paid to keep blog ad-free • Donated free books to library, bloggers • Blog used to raise fund for charity	**Destabilizing:** • Corporate profit from advertisements on fan blogs | free labor **Restabilizing:** • MLB Pro Blog used to recognize other fans • Gave overflow of products to charity • Blog used to raise funds for charity	**Destabilizing:** • YouTube comments suspicious about profiting & self-promoting **Restabilizing:** • Videos were not monetized; other funds raised go to charity • Reiterated Kaylee's origin story • Worked toward 501(c)3 status to allow for more corporate donations	Promoting the common good (linking corporate goods & civic commons)

Table 7.3, cont.

Overview of Findings on (De|Re)Stabilization

Research Question #3: What were sources of instabilities in young writers' networked publics? How were those instabilities negotiated?					
	Common Instabilities	**This Kid Reviews Books**	**Matt's Bats**	**reKindle**	**Writers Repaired to Hetero-geneity By:**
3	Wider audiences are destabilizing but necessary for growth	**(De | Re)Stabilizing** • Competition among new releases	**(De | Re)Stabilizing** • Widening commercial sponsors	**(De | Re)Stabilizing** • Un-compagnies on YouTube	Embracing "beautiful mayhem"
4	Constant Demand for Attention	**Restabilizing** • Co-host • Content from | with others • Parent admin & workflow support • Kid's role becomes creative leadership	**Restabilizing** • Content from | with others • Parent admin support • Kid's role becomes creative leadership	**Restabilizing** • Local charity partners • Parent admin support • Kid's role becomes creative leadership	Developing partnerships

A closer look Table 7.3 explains how instabilities were negotiated through these means. As shown in Row 1, I found that grassroots and professional groups had differences in opinion on matters of quality. This was apparent not so much online to me (at first), but was revealed through one-on-one interviews with representatives of these different groups. For example, media professionals worried about quality matters like these: They worried that people like fan bloggers or independent publishers might not show the correct media decorum (like asking to take pictures with baseball players on the job); Or that they might not use the customary professional standards (like writing unbiased reportage); Or that they might not appreciate that publishing was a complex enterprise (that is was more about relationships, not just pressing a button to "publish"); or that they might mistake self-publishing for being synonymous or equal to what being "a published author" means in the industry.

I found that when young writers encountered these tensions about quality between groups (Row 1), they responded by *appreciating diversit*y. That is, they welcomed all perspectives—recognizing all kinds of writers regardless of where they worked or who vetted them or how old they were. They all got to the same stage, and their unique perspectives were a source of interest and curiosity, but not judgment. For example, Erik was happy to celebrate all stripes of writers, meeting them wherever they were in their craft with appreciation for the positives. At the same time, Matt—when journalists alerted him to the issue of bias in reporting—took the concern seriously by interviewing lots of other writers about what they thought—weighing in appreciatively, while also pointing toward the one professional writing position he saw as encompassing bias and professionalism: the color commentator. It was as if to say: *I see what you mean about professional standards and we should keep talking about that. Also, my Twitter friends and I really like to cheer, so we gravitate to the one professional who is allowed to cheer. That's my favorite kind of writing, and when I grow up I'll be a real writer—like him.* Repeatedly like this, the negotiation effort was to seam grassroots' and professionals' interests together.

Another source of controversy was over profit. This is reflected in Row 2 of Table 7.3. If quality was the contentious issue for professionals, profit was the contentious issue for grassroots groups. For tightly-knit communities of readers, authors, and fans, integrity was related to service. They collaborated to do charitable work. They were conscious about power and profit, and they made decisions to collaborate with corporations not because their goals were fully aligned, but because they recognized the opportunity for mutual benefit. For example, baseball fans knew their creative work was a valuable promotion for a for-profit corporation, but at the same time they purposefully drew on that relationship in order to promote their fandom and raise money for a fandom charity. I observed that young writers negotiated concerns over profit similarly: they invited heterogeneity by linking the different groups to *promote the common good*. They didn't reject corporate interests; they used them to support the civic-minded groups they also cared about.

Beyond group-to-group controversies, children and families also negotiated the ongoing instability that comes inherently with networked publics: they must be kept up. As shown in Row 3, the same sources that generated ongoing streams of new attention to these networked publics—new releases, commercial sponsors, and tumult on YouTube—could easily be overwhelming to the kid. The kid could end up with too many book review requests; hundreds of emails; a flood of corporate products to give away; truckloads of donations; a never-ending stream of commentary on viral videos; etc. Also, all the kids and parents spoke to me about the issue of time and how it had to be purposefully negotiated with kids, as it took considerable time to write, respond, and participate in events related to children's online interests while fitting it all in around school and other activities. The response, again, was to embrace heterogeneity. Here in Row 3, I invoked Chris' mindset to stand for what all families expressed in one way or another: that the overflowing of response and opportunity was a little bit of mayhem, but "beautiful mayhem" (Chris, Interview, 2-17-15). They'd come to expect the unexpected—to anticipate that more would return to them than they could imagine. They were ready for that.

At the same time, this was a lot for kids; they weren't shy to admit this took a great deal of time, and they also had school demands. Here, the repair was to *develop partnerships*. Publics required attention, but they also seem to be expert in giving it back. Over time, the flow of offers became "inbound" (Chris, Interview, 12-19-14)—from sources like local partners, book requests, guest bloggers, interviewees, people on social media who wanted to volunteer, etc. They would help keep things going. Still, the most important partnerships of all in these cases were the kids with their parents. Parents took on roles as secretaries and administrators, dividing the labor so that kids could participate as creators and speakers and doers and have fun, without being overwhelmed by the management of it all. Here, the repair was to make networked public life part of everyday home life—a daily, shared, intergenerational, digital literacy partnership.

Discussion of (De|Re)Stabilization

How do these findings relate to our current understandings of writing and young writers? There are some connections in the current literature. First, this study offers further evidence of the complexities of children's emerging digital literacies as they intersect with commercial interests. In a recent study of a "child as cyberflâneur," Marsh (2014b) observed a four-year-old boy in watching videos of a YouTube celebrity kid unpacking commercial toys (part of a wider popular trend on YouTube known as "unboxing" videos). Marsh warned against assumptions that this activity was just a way to get children to rush out and consume more toys; rather, the digital literacy practice was motivated by the enjoyment of another child's video and play practices. Participation was the point. (See also Chapter 2)

Similar points about the potentially generativity of bringing commercial and noncommercial interests together have been raised in scholarship on digital culture. In these examples of adaptiveness to the different positions by kids, we see echoes of what scholars have noticed adults and businesses doing to negotiate with each other in networked communities:

> Collaborators are complicit with the dominant regimes of power, yet they often also use their incorporation into that system to redirect its energies or reroute its resources. At the same time, companies often have to tolerate behaviors that may have once been seen as resistant or transgressive if they want to court the participation of these networked communities. (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 173)

Scholars of digital culture have recommended networking literacies that include careful assessment of whether these arrangements are fair trades or exploitive (Rheingold, 2012, p. 135), and keeping a "healthy skepticism" and "weighing carefully bids for our participation" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 175). This study shows children and families exercising those kinds of judgments.

Finally, we can see across these findings resonances with what others have noted about instabilities in the larger history of literacy that are playing out now. In the debate over standards of writing and what will count as quality (see Row 1), we see played out the trust issue that has been here since the start of writing; as described above and by Gee and Hayes (2011), writing's legacy of experts and institutions is now clashing with the return of amateurism (more association with oral culture), now resorting in digital. Further, in the tumult of ever-increasing demands on children and families as writers (see Rows 2-4), we can appreciate again the resonances with Brandt's notion of sponsorship in the history of literacy—with literacy learners set in between those who compete to (re)set the standards for what writing will be and who will profit from it.

The children and families navigating this issue reflects habits of what Brandt (2015) described as the new "writing class": those who are more educated and more employed, and will have more decision-making and gatekeeping responsibilities in setting the new conditions for literacy moving forward (p. 157). Power in a networked age is associated with practices like those we've seen in this study:

> Membership in a society of writers becomes second nature to those who labor each day in contexts of intense text production, where encounters with other writing literates are routine, formative, and consequential, where those procedure fortified by powerful writing technologies and economic incentives, and where writing-based forms of getting things done can be casually carried into other spheres of life… Through words and actions undertaken on a daily basis, members of the "writing class" lay down the conditions with which others must cope (p. 157).

What a translation model allowed us to see is this unlikely finding: even little children are laying down conditions for participation. Children in these cases were marrying the commercial and the civic, embracing the instabilities, folding together a variety of sponsors, attracting them with strong digital portfolios, and doing what needed to be done to interest others. Of course, they did so with intense parental support, outside of school. And this should be of concern to us, as professionals whose charge it is to care for the futures of all children and for the future of schooling in a democratic society. Taken together, these findings suggest new and important points for consideration in literacy teaching and research moving forward. These considerations are the focus of the next (and final) section of this investigation.

Implications for Literacy Teaching

This dissertation began by revisiting Yancey's (2009) call to action to literacy educators: to create new models of literacy development by studying what young people do in writing publics outside of school, and to create new models for education that develop members of writing publics. To do so, she suggested we'd turn away from the troubled legacy of writing in schools—linked to things like moral ambivalence, labor, and testing—and create a new history for writing instruction. Its worthy goal would be to develop future citizen-writers,

> whose civic literacy is global in its sensibility and its communicative potential, and whose commitment to humanity is characterized by consistency and generosity as well as the ability to write for purposes that are unconstrained and audiences that are nearly unlimited. (p. 321)

Responding to that call, this research has observed young writers in networked publics outside of schools. In doing so, it contributes some things our new models of writing might consider with respect to the delivery of writing—identifying important dimensions of writing delivery now, like attention to temporality, service, credibility, heterogeneity, and adaptability.

At the same time, this investigation noted that new things about writing related to old things about writing, like its association with problems of trust, commercialism, craft, and competition to set the standards for quality in writing. Though this study begins with the same desire it began with—to develop writing publics and teach into them—it ends with a greater appreciation of the complexities of writing publics and how to move forward. We'd do better not to look past writing's history, but to look more deeply into it. We'd also do well to revisit and build on our strong foundations literacy education: oral language, classroom conversation, genre study, authentic instruction, rich text environments, and appreciating linguistic and cultural diversity. In this way, we might successfully enroll our common past in literacy studies to mobilize writing instruction that teaches the art of networked public discourse. Here are some considerations for literacy educators and researchers interested in doing that.

Implication 1: Draw On Our Foundations in Oral Language To Teach Networked Written Discourse

We're well-poised to study the effective delivery of language-in-use in education. In literacy studies, we share a common appreciation of the social nature of literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 1984) and the dialogic nature of language (Bakhtin, 1986; Volosinov 1929/1973). But more particularly, this kind of study in classrooms will draw on our strong history of appreciating and studying the *performance* of language in interaction, beginning in traditions of studying orality. Delivery is part of the classical canon of rhetoric and took a special place in schools with the Elocutionary Movement in the 18th and 19th century, which was interested in the performance of texts for an audience with the right pitch, quality, force, abruptness time, etc. Delivery in writing wasn't so much of a focus in print culture (it was mostly treated as a decision about which medium to use) (Trimbur, 2003).

However, in Language Arts instruction with our ties to oral language, we've never stopped focusing on helping learners to become stronger performers of language in interaction. Speaking and listening are central to our standards for Language Arts curriculum—encompassing reading and writing, but also listening and speaking. We closely observe children's oral language and communication, and we teach into interaction: how to listen attentively, to respond appreciatively, and to build on one another's talk. As reflected in our professional literature, we strive to build rich conversations about writing and writers, including routines of response to other writers (e.g., Wood Ray, 2001). We recognize the importance of creating more democratic conversation (e.g., Johnston, 2004; Nichols, 2006b). We support children's habits of heart and mind for valuing what each other have to say and inviting each other to speak; we teach that discussion is not just waiting "to say their thing" but "thinking together" in dialogue, an understanding of which is "at the heart of civic life" (Bomer & Bomer, 2001, p. 101; see also Johnston, 2012). Moving from whole group into small group peer conversation, we purposefully support children's increasing independence in building conversation with one another (e.g., Maloch, 2004; McIntyre, Kyle, & Moore, 2006).

In response to the rise of networked communication, we might now apply these strengths at developing interaction in oral language toward networked written language online. As we've seen, expertise in written public discourse depended on expertise in interaction. ["That's the strength of a blog: the ability to interact. And when you don't, your blog just doesn't go anywhere. And Erik is just a master at that—interaction. (Michelle Isenhoff, Interview, 8-4-14)]

Moving into the study of networked discourse would extend literacy instruction into new possibilities. Following Johnson-Eilola and Selber (2007; also Johnson-Eilola, 1998; Selber, 2003), we might extend our perspectives on writing as the *production* of original texts, to writing as the *connection* of fragments that re-represent other texts, and use them responsively to negotiate problems and take social action in the world. If we think of writing as connection, we might shift our attention in publishing from the "final draft" to ongoing social activity. In our evaluation of writing, by extending, we might shift from assessing just the qualities of product to also assessing the effects of the writing in the world. Who does it reach? Who does it serve? How is it taken up?

Relatedly, Leander and Boldt's (2012) have recently introduced into literacy studies a call for attention away from "privileging texts as the final outcome and purpose of literacy practice" (a problem they associate with the ways the New London Group's emphasis on design and redesign has been taken up); drawing on assemblage theory, these authors argue for literacy studies to appreciate literacy as it unfolds dynamically in the "living temporality of the present"—not toward goals that are already known, but engaging "the flow and surprise of practice" (p. 33). Bringing this sensibility toward the practical doing of writing in interaction, we might extend from thinking of publishing as a singular moment in writing (the delivery of a final product) to *publishing* something more like *public-ing*: making ongoing, responsive decisions moment-by-moment as we engage with emergent audiences in networked public discourse.

Implication 2: Go Public With Classroom Discourse

It is one thing to imagine networked discourse among peers. It is another to imagine it as it was in these cases—the building of relations with people who we don't know yet. This part is at the heart of public discourse. Recalling Dewey (1927), publicness is civic activity that involves us in concern about events that we aren't immediately affected by, abstracting our perception to care about distant people and matters that concern them (see also Barnett, 2008). If we mean for young writers to learn this, it is essential that we put them into closer conversation with the world; as Bomer and Bomer (2001) have recognized, becoming "citizen activists, people who can respond to social currents that are larger than the usual circle of their own life, requires that all people assume they are in dialogue with the world and the world with them" (p. 101). It is not enough to do networked writing in public spaces—as Boyd (2014) has distinguished, it is commonplace for young people to *be in public* online, but still rare for them to *be public* online—to gather and connect with audiences on a larger scale, and construct publics with a political sensibility, seeing public life as something to participate in because it makes the world a better place. As this investigation framed and studied networked publics, we saw that being public involved learning to do things like: exercise social imagination about other people's work; use genres of appreciation and recommendation to build trust and anticipate the needs of others; and respond flexibly to what real people actually needed when they showed up.

Again, we can call upon our many strengths in literacy education. Appreciating the social nature of language, we've understood that genres are dynamic forms that reflect the purposes of the people who practice them (Halliday & Hassan, 1985). Relatedly, we've observed the efficacy of teaching young writers with real-life audience and purposes (Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007). For three decades now in classroom research, we've appreciated how children's awareness of audience develops in contexts where they adapt writing to real audience—immediate or imagined (e.g., Kroll, 1984; Rowe, 1989; Wollman-Bonilla, 2000; 2001; also see Rowe's 2003 review of literature). We've noticed how young writers' classrooms negotiate their social positions with each other around and through writing (e.g., Bomer & Laman, 2004; Daiute & Dalton, 1988; Rowe, 2003). In writer's workshop pedagogy, opportunities to give and receive feedback continue to be a mainstay (Calkins, 1986; Graves & Hansen, 1983). In addition to peers and teachers giving feedback, workshops bring other authors' voices into the room through things like books and videos and even classroom visits—not only from professional writers (if it were possible), but different kinds of people who write in their professions or as a hobby (Wood Ray, 1999). Since the advent of digital communication, we've noticed how technology can create interactive audiences among peer writers (Baker, Rosendal & Whitenack, 2000), and, more recently, we've begun to explore the possibilities of using social networking platforms to create spaces where our students can build conversation with one another online, or with parents, other teachers, community members, and other classes (Wilber, 2010). Now, we can draw on appreciations about writing as social negotiation—all of what we've learned in the social turn in writing—and now apply it into a public turn in writing (Mathieu, 2005).

Here, we'd the reset the bar on audience awareness: from imagining we're in dialogue with the world, to actually being in dialogue with it. As we've seen, children can be (and are) legitimate participants in public life online. Though children have long fascinated us as educators, we might find—as did this study—that children are fascinating to lots of other people too, and for lots of different reasons. To scaffold them from *being in public* online to *being public* online, we'd make the public turn with writing instruction in K-12 education. To do so, we'd need to extend from given-audiences of familiar and often co-present others (like families and peers), and create opportunities to imagine and choose new audiences—people we don't yet know, but want to know. We could model, or explore together with young writers side-by-side (as in these cases) what it means to find an audience. We could think together about how we build trust with others; for example, through ongoing dialogue, or digital portfolios that give us credibility, or through timely and routine activity responses to other people's needs, or through building a habit of sharing what is we have to share that might be important and of service in the world. We could invite new audiences, build trust, collaborate, negotiate, and adapt. In doing so, we'd be doing what Yancey (2009) called for—creating generous citizen writers who are globally-aware in their civic literacies and can "write for purposes that are unconstrained and audiences that are nearly unlimited" (p. 321).

Though the presence of known others as a writing community is undoubtedly still very important, it can't be the only thing. It would perpetuate the existing participation gap (Jenkins et al., 2006), as they mostly develop outside of school with children like those we've seen. In addition, always assigning audiences when opportunities are limitless sends a message that is counter to the democratic aims of schooling. It would suggest that writers already know which people matter in the world—and it's the people they already know, or know about. If we hope that digital, participatory culture will make new things possible in the world, then we've got to use the tools we have available to practice publicness. We must teach them to imagine the others with interest and empathy, to seek diverse others with a mindset of appreciation, and to write with and for the world as an act of connection and service. Audience awareness shifts to participatory action. Like the young people whom Brandt (2015) observed, reading "like writers" to perfect sentence-level craft technique shifts to reading "as writers" for cues about social interaction and how to situate our writing and respond to other writers. Here, evaluation shifts from the perfection of the product to the effects of the performance: Whom does this writing attract? Does it build trust and continuity and collaboration? What difference does it make in the world?

At the same time, to make a public turn with children is different than with teens or college-aged writers. The first thing, clearly, will be to keep children safe from harm. This is something for which we've gone to great lengths to devise strategies. Internet safety seems likely (if not already) to be standard curriculum in schooling, just as we treat other matters of public health in schools (e.g., stranger danger, drugs and alcohol education, sexual education, and making healthy choices). As the internet becomes more basic to our everyday lives, more children are online and the discourse is shifting from internet safety to internet opportunity. The new questions raised for schools will be more complex, social questions: Do we want to open up schools onto the world more fully? Who is "out there?" Will we like what they do and say? Will those things contradict what we value? How would we respond if they did? This leads to a third and final recommendation coming out of this study for schooling.

Implication 3: Find Home In Heterogeneity

If we perform writing as public discourse in schools—open to new participants and possibilities—we'll have to be willing to adapt and negotiate. As Brandt (2015) has pointed out, reading-based values for literacy have become dominant in schools, and those are different than the values that are associated with writing-based literacy—which have now risen to the fore in importance of our information economy: "If mass reading has been implicated in the making of believers, citizens, consumers, and learners, mass writing has been implicated in the making of goods and services" (Brandt, 2009, p. 63). The shift to writing as the dominant partner over reading will challenge the things we mean and do with literacy:

> The rise of mass writing demands our confrontation with "the gritty vocational heritage of writing and its association with work, competition, artisanship, commercialism, apprenticeship, performance, publicity—a heritage that… continues to catalyze the literacy experiences of writing-oriented youths, even as it remains muted in reading-dominant, school-based literacy instruction. (Brandt, 2015, p. 127).

The instabilities portions of these cases, especially, suggest some of the grit that comes with writing as public discourse. It's not just civics. As did these young writers and families, we'd need to expect the unexpected, invite newcomers, marry the commercial and the civic, appreciate more diverse standards for quality in writing, and manage the mayhem that abundance of opportunity brings with it.

Much about our history as a field works in our favor. We are observant and appreciative of local uses of literacy and differences across communities (Heath, 1983). We appreciate that literacy is always—and now rapidly—changing (Leu, 2006). We define literacy as ideological—not a single set of skills, but always shifting and tied to power (Street, 1984). In literacy pedagogy, it is common to link to authentic audiences and purposes for writing (as above). We recognize and celebrate children's writing. Rather than distinguishing it from professional writing, we encourage it and celebrate its brilliance (Bomer, 2010). We offer children the identities of real writers by publishing their work and putting it in the classroom library. We are also experts in creating supportive workflows for writers—offering time for responding to books and sharing, but also protecting time for writing, and we understand the value of daily routines for readers and writers, and predictable structures. In sum, we come equipped to this task of writing in networked publics with mindsets toward authentic audiences, diversity, and the management of work.

A pedagogy of writing publics will turn these interests up a notch—by testing, and even insisting upon, our openness to diversity and democratic participation. In the examples above, we can appreciate the values we've long associated with literacy in a reading-based school culture: there is warmth about appreciating different communities and encouraging young writers, and a comfort in predictable daily routines that we all engage in at the same time, writing within our classrooms for each other, or publishing to classrooms and families. In the cases we've observed, that warmth is still present to a degree—as we've seen, civically-minded groups sharing interests, collaborating, fundraising, etc. But we also see things relatively unfamiliar to our writing classrooms—things we might not expect or even like: promotions of commercial partners and their products; free labor; the necessity of displaying one's own accomplishments; writing of poor and variable quality being celebrated and even sold to children; and young writers' time and labor coming into demand at a dizzying pace.

As I see it, there are a two ways we could go from here. The first way would be to hold fast to values for literacy that are like what we're accustomed to from our legacy in reading: We would stand firmly in favor of high-quality literature for children; as is typical practice in classrooms, we would continue to always choose mentor texts that reflect the idea that the best books are vetted by major commercial publishers who are the ones responsible for telling people what counts as good literature and setting the bar for what all authors should aspire to be like and what readers should want to read. When we extend our classroom libraries into e-books, we would continue to prioritize only the major publishers' sites and products, and be skeptical or ignore completely the new variety of independently-published books because we don't read them ourselves. In schools, we would keep our attention online only toward educational or civic groups, assuming those are the main or only parts of the world applicable to children. Online chat about books could be in protected spaces where only our students have access, so that the risks of contact with outside entities would be sure to be avoided.

An alternative way to go would be to double-down on our appreciation of literacy's social and cultural diversity. Taking this approach, we could do what kids in this study did as they adapted and negotiated with diverse entities to create more powerful writing publics. That is, we could bring different interests together and invited them into conversation. In our classrooms, this could look like doing author studies of *both* professional authors and indie authors, and including both in our school libraries (or e-readers). We could go online to browse a variety of booksellers, *both* traditional and small or independent publishers, and consider their different standards and goals as options we could draw flexibly on. While we were online, we could engage together in communities of other writers who talk about books, and maybe even writers who want to sell us their books. We could even seek out companies that might like to have our opinions about their services and products, and have a routine way to show them that we share our favorite things with our other communities online.

Here, we'd be cautious but willing to consider the possibility of doing more than cultural critique—looking to possibilities for our grassroots and industry to engage in positive dialogue (as Jenkins et al., 2006). We'd see it as part of our responsible participation in the world to engage all kinds of audiences' civic responsibilities to participate in public discussions online, and to invite new people into our conversations. We'd not apologize for being interested in social networking tools, nor would continue to stereotype them "as everything from dangerous and nonacademic to violent and confusing to adults" (Wilber, 2010, p. 95). We'd also help writers to manage the tumult of their workflow—offering them supports to become increasingly conscious of how they spend their time and organize their responsibilities in online communities.

A new role for schooling might parallel the role of parents in these cases, who were responsible for these kinds of things: guiding, administering, keeping clear on mission, and helping young writers tease through the ways their literacies would be used, by whom, and for whom. We'd envision public education as "a process of guiding kids' participation in public life more generally, a public life that includes social recreation and civic engagement," and that enlists "an engaged and diverse set of publics that are broader than what we traditionally think of as educational and civic institutions" (Ito et. al., 2010, pp. 352-353). We'd become like these case-study parents were: administrators and editors and monitors, who help children sort and select from available opportunities, and keep clear on what serves their interests as learners and citizens. We'd take all of what writing has to offer under consideration, recognizing that "when writing is treated pedagogically in all of its fullness, it engages ethics and a sense of risk and responsibility. It becomes consequential, dramatic, dangerous, demanding, rewarding, and capable of changing self and others." (Brandt, 2015, p. 166) Though these kinds of considerations, we might come closer to developing the kind of citizen-writers who would mark a new chapter in the history of literacy.

Implication 4: The Difference Between "Mayhem" And "Beautiful Mayhem" Is Having Some Stability, and Teachers Can Help With That

To design and carry out a study of networked publics, this research process brought me into contact with ever-widening circles of scholarship: digital rhetorics, technical communication, college composition, new media studies, the sociology of science and technology, interdisciplinary writing studies, and interdisciplinary methods for internet inquiry. Much like the children whom I studied, I sat in front of the computer screen day after day, connected to a world of distant scholars and literature and participants. Often, I thought of Brandt's (2001) notion of sponsorship, wondering about the distant agents who were recruiting me through this screen.

At the same time, it was such a pleasure to have conversations with people I'd never have met otherwise. I was recruiting them, just as they were recruiting me right back—as, for example, did one 14-year-old boy who tweeted to me during my data collection for Matt's Bats ("I read a tweet of yours something about interviewing a baseball blogger? I happen to be a kid baseball blogger if you needed an interview?"). It was surprising, to feel so connected to distant others, to feel such limitless opportunity for connection to people whom I'd never meet otherwise. It required moving from the security and intimacy of coursework, and close in-person working relationships with my peers and professors, to new and unpredictable relationships. It was exhilarating—but also "mayhem" (to borrow Chris's term). At times, I felt entirely overwhelmed by the expansion of literatures and methods and trying to tease out their differences and similarities—realizing that they might not necessarily even recognize each other. Unlike my participants, I didn't have a space online where the entities could work out their differences; they were clashing in my writing, asking me to represent so many different perspectives. I tried to embrace it all, as did my participants. This meant taking an interdisciplinary approach, choosing flexibly and eclectically, and knowing that I'd betray every approach in some aspect. Indeed, translation is inevitably transformation (Latour, 1986b).

What has hopefully brought this study from mayhem to "beautiful mayhem" (another of Chris' terms) was the same for me as it was for the kids in this study. Recall that they relied on their parents to be their administrators, to help them set reasonable schedules, and to help them stay clear in their mission. I, too, needed more experienced others to be my administrators. And so to make sense of the mayhem, I turned to the teaching and scholarship of my local committee to help me recall my mission, wondering about implications at every turn in this dissertation based on our shared concerns: classroom teaching and research that is ever-more supportive to all young people.

Another way through the mayhem was to have a deadline for turning this into a stable thing—a text, as ANT would appreciate—to hold us together. Returning home from a distance, then, I finally had something to share (a dissertation), packed into a set implications that I will hope will make this research more mobile in the world. But like all souvenirs of travel, the question becomes where to put them. Where do they fit in at home? What must be reshuffled if we keep them? Do we like the way they look? And, as this section addresses, would we travel there again? If we did, what would we do differently? To literacy researchers who are coming from a social practice perspective and considering an actor-network or similar approach, I offer the following questions for their future consideration.

How will you accommodate competing world views? ANT's orientation is not to look up at macro social whole or higher-level order, but to look down into infinite complexity (Law, 2004). It celebrates messiness and non-coherence (Law, 2006). By contrast, social science methodologies more typically look for clarity and coherence (Law, 2006), and might see a performative approach as "confused or unclear" (Law, 2004, p. 24). In an empirical study, these aren't just theoretical problems; you've got to make a practical decision. The tension between these approaches played out in the writing of the cases in this dissertation: one more concisely sewn up and seemingly certain (reKindle); one more loose and descriptive (Matt's Bats); and one descriptive but more consciously kept tight to theory (This Kid Reviews Books). The contrasts in cases show messiness ANT brought to my sensibilities. It wants description and performance. But in turning this into social science research for external audiences, the push might be toward less description and more coherence. The cases are, of course, adaptable and revisable in the future. But in their current form, they evidence that coherence and non-coherence, summing up and infinite complexity, competed in every step of the way. In future research, taking a strong stance one way or the other might be advisable at the outset—although it might also limit the opportunity for their generative struggle against one another. It would, however, save the researcher a considerable amount of insecurity and hand-wringing about the final product.

How much time do you have? The methodological gain of ANT was following loose, unpredictable connections across a widely-distributed landscape. As a performative case study, it didn't demand clear boundaries (Yin, 2009). But not knowing where you're going means that it could take you a long time to get there—or at the very least, that you'll worry about time. It's like going around without a watch but knowing you're expected to be on time when you arrive. Deadlines in a study like this are important to call you back from the field. I was fortunate to have the benefit of time and patience in my research setting, but if those things are limited for a researcher, this may not be a favorable methodological approach to choose.

How will you find stability amidst the instabilities? As above, I looked to my mission—held in place for me by my institution and colleagues—as a source of stability. I also looked to constructs and approaches that were more common to literacy studies, to anchor me. Following Spinuzzi's (2008) approach, I brought genres into the analysis—although they are more akin to cultural-historical perspectives than ANT, as he notes. Then, to sweep up the messiness of my situational analyses (Clarke, 2005), I needed to call on my ethnographic codes more heavily and bring in qualitative research software, to make sense of the swelling amount of data and to arrive at broad patterns that I felt were trustworthy. Finally, to make sense of my findings, I leaned on cultural-historical research in literacy. These stabilities—in mission, in constructs, in methods, and in cultural perspectives—were necessary to be sure that this study of things not as familiar in literacy studies could appeal to the audience I most wanted to speak to: literacy studies. Though instabilities are productive, stabilities are necessary. This became clearer to me as the study went on, and as I later found, was something other research had cautioned about learning related to informal online communities--that for people to learn what they need to in their work, they need to do some stabilizing of the fluidity, as "expanding a network can create an unwieldy entity" (p. 260). Future researchers might do well to identify and appreciate those stabilities early or en-route in order to keep from getting overwhelmed.

What will you care about most? This study was drawn toward ANT's interests in texts as objects, but ended up I ended up favoring humans throughout my analysis. In part, this was due to my pedagogical imperative toward children; it compelled me to stay with their perspectives. In addition, there, though I set out thinking about distribution of digital texts as something akin to material objects (e.g., Trimbur, 2000), the more I observed digital texts in use, I found that technologies seemed like objects (e.g., like search engines programmed to do something), but that texts seemed quite different than that. So I leaned toward distribution of texts as something performative (following Brooke, 2009). In both of these aspects—the favoring of humans and the notion of distribution as something enacted not necessarily on a unified object—I found that my thinking aligned more closely with Mol's (2002) practice-oriented ethnography, in which objects come into being as they are enacted, and how they are enacted differently across localities. Future research on how texts cross distances might consider Mol's more fluid approach to thinking about texts as objects.

To conclude, rather than naming what implications this study has for the world, the next move is to step back and see what effects it has (as ANT likes to do). Does it interest? Does it attract? Can it be mobilized and spread? What other writing does it inspire? Translation suggests a "whirlwind model" for innovations—

to find success, you've got to see what people take up, and then compromise and adapt (Akrich et al., 2002). I look forward feedback from literacy scholars and educators that might help me adapt this research ever-more closely to their interests and needs, and come ever-closer to achieve our common goals of service to young writers in schools.

Appendix A: Top Blogs Ranked by Technorati

Social Media News Blog & URL	Blog Ranking on Technorati*	Blog Ranking on Alexa	Blog Visitors/Month per Quantcast	Blog Content
The Huffington Post huffingtonpost .com	#1 Blog overall Top 100 entertainment Top 100 politics Top 100 living Top 100 USA politics	#20 USA, #80 world	59.2 million USA, 77.8 million world	Selects content from other new sources (e.g., Associated Press, Mother Jones, Fox News, Daily Koz). Also features original blog posts.
BuzzFeed buzzfeed.com	#2 Blog overall Top 100 entertainment Top 100 living Top 100 celebrity	#157 USA, #508 world	12.7 million USA, 18.3 million world	Selects content using a combination of technological methods and an editorial selection process.
TechCrunch techcrunch. com	#3 Blog overall Top 100 business Top 100 technology Top 100 infotech Top 100 gadgets	#298 USA, #371 world	739,700 USA	Selects content via columnists and contributors interested in tech news.
Mashable mashable.com	#4 Blog overall Top 100 entertainment Top 100 technology Top 100 gadgets	#221 USA, #276 world	4.0 million USA, 7.7 million world	Selects content related to social media. Also reports on digital innovations.
Daily Beast thedailybeast. com	#5 Blog overall Top 100 overall Top 100 world politics	#248 USA, #997 world	Not indexed	Selects content related to breaking news. Also features commentary.

* Technorati Ranking on October 2, 2012

Appendix B: Charting Potential Cases (Exemplar Entries)

Case & Key Websites	Links from Top Blogs	Description	Evidence of Child's Participation in Distribution?	Evidence of Circulation?	Meets Criteria ?
MattyB Raps http://www.youtube.com/user/MattyBRaps https://twitter.com/MattyBRaps …	http://mashable.com/2012/06/11/matty-b-bieber-boyfriend http://www.buzzfeed.com/sayomg/8-year-old-raps-britney-tah	9 year old rapper Viral since 7 years old	Posts on Twitter, vlogs on YouTube, etc. Example of MattyB's strategies for distribution: "If you like my video you can help spread my music by clicking LIKE, FAVORITE & SHARE with your friends on Facebook & Twitter! If every member of One Direction saw this video AND liked it... that would be totally radi-cool! J"	327M views on YouTube, 717K+ subscribers on YouTube Lots of media attention (Today Show, etc.) Multiple media platforms: YouTube, Twitter, Keek, Facebook, Instagram	Yes
Caine's Arcade http://cainesarcade.com https://twitter.com/CainesArcade …	http://mashable.com/2012/04/11/caines-arcade http://mashable.com/2012/09/14/caines-cardboard-follow-up …	Viral, short film about a 9-year-old boy's arcade, made out of cardboard. The arcade is flash mobbed as part of a documentary-in-the-making.	No. Distribution (Twitter, Facebook posts) seems to come from the filmmaker and foundation, not from the child himself.	Short film went viral on internet and spawned a invention/engineering curriculum for kids, foundation, movement, etc.	No. Distribution is "about" a child, not "by" a child.

Appendix C1: Child and Parent Interview Protocol

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Interview Tasks</th></tr>
<tr><td>Beginning</td><td>Focus: Building Rapport and Renewing Consent

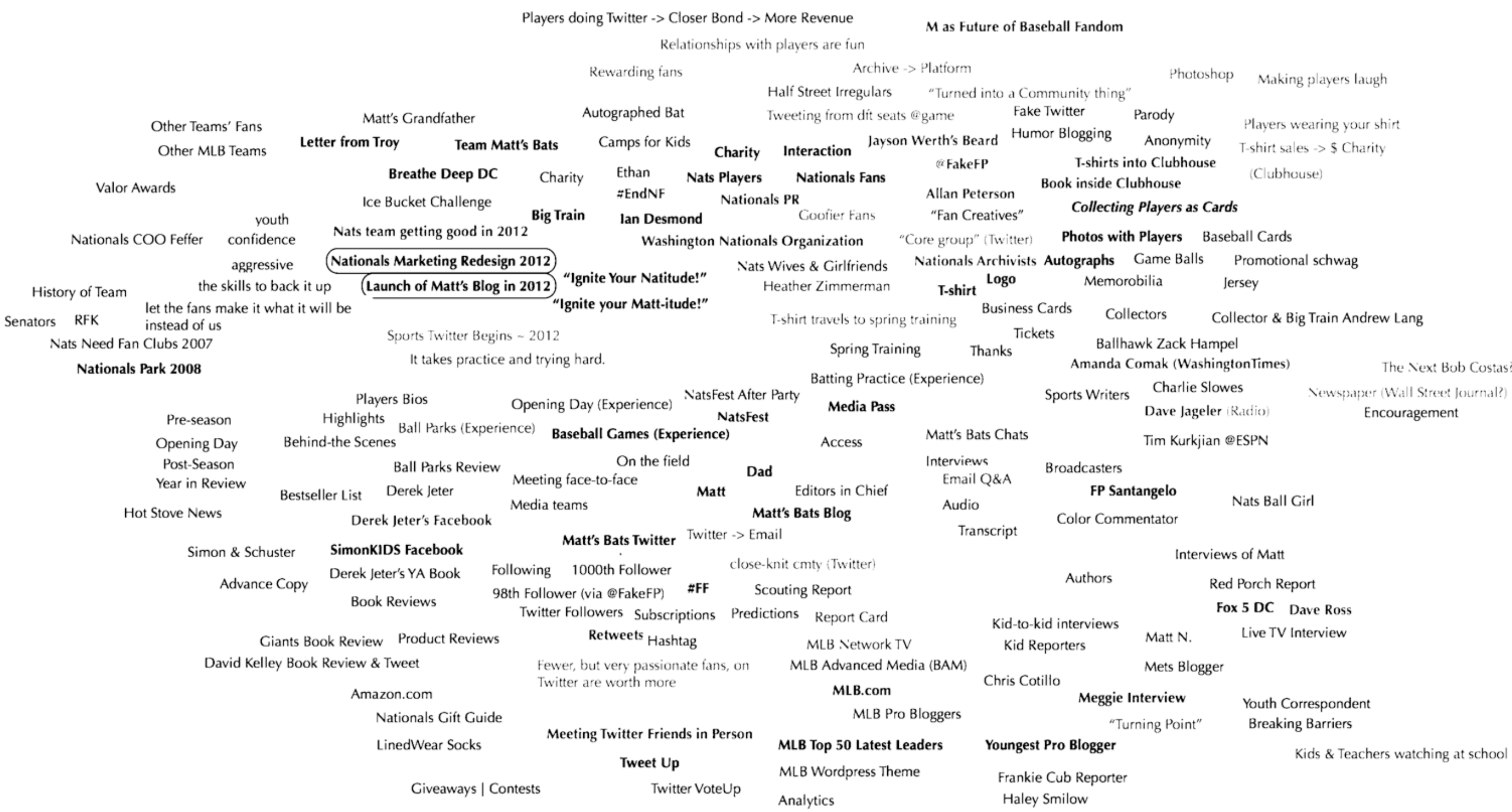
- Greeting/Icebreaker
- Review purpose of study and re-affirm consent as outlined on documents signed ahead
- Reiterate and re-affirm consent on use of real names (since case is already public, this study is different than other studies where participants are anonymous)
- Introduce roles, with appreciation for expertise and experience of parent/child
- Introduce logistics (e.g., interview length, procedures for withdrawing - may close laptop or turn of screen any time)
- Provide reassurance that there are no wrong answers (“It’s fine to ‘Pass’ or say ‘I don’t know’”)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Middle</td><td>Focus: Identifying Key People and Events, and Eliciting Talk about Them

Recall the questions sent to participant ahead of interview: In terms of your experiences related to your blog/website/online project:
- What have been your most favorite moments? What excited you? (“Highs”)
- What have been your least favorite moments? What have you worried about? (“Lows”)
- Who has really helped you succeed? What did they do?
- What advice would you give to another kid who wanted to share what they love on the internet?
Potential prompts to support continuation of talk:
o Go on, this is great…
o Mm hmm, so…,
o That’s interesting…
o Then what happened?</td></tr>
</table>

	Interview Tasks
Middle	Potential prompts to support elaboration of talk: o What was happening at that time? o Why you were doing that? o Why was that moment important? o What you were learning? o Who/what/when/where/why/how was…, o Can you tell me what happened, step by step? o Will you say more about that? o What do you mean by that? o Can you give me an example? o How did you feel about that? Potential prompts to elicit talk about circulation: o What kind of people do you meet online? Have you ever met anyone in person that you met online? What happened? o What kind of people read your blog? Who writes back to you? What kinds of things are they interested in o Has anyone else been influenced by your blog to do something similar? Who? Where? Potential prompts to elicit talk about habits and strategies for internet use: o Can you tell me about a typical day at your computer? Walk me through your routine. o Where do you usually like to go on the internet? o How is this like/unlike how you use the internet at school? o What are you working on now? Next? What advice would you give kids who want use the internet this way?
End	**Focus: Closing and Thanks** - Are there any other questions you think I should have asked? Do you have any questions for me? - Plans for following up - Appreciations and thanks

Appendix D: Situational Map Exemplar

Matt's Bats Case Map (Version 10-3-14)

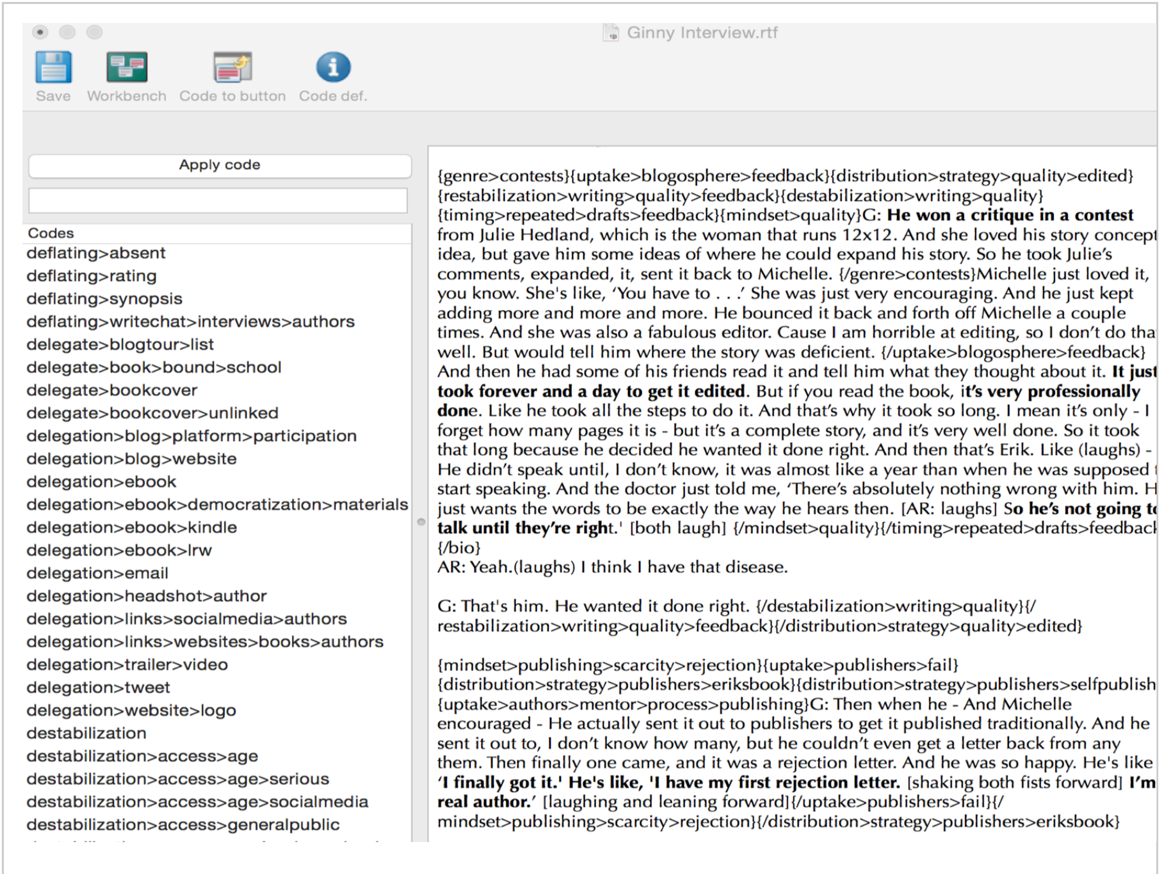


Appendix E1: Key Codes in TAMS

Codes Prioritized during Analysis in TAMS (A Priori and Emergent)	
access	OPP (obligatory passage point)
allies	panorama
artifacting	portfolio
artifacting>allies	problematization
attribution	reading
controversy	restabilization
crosscase	school
deflating	spokesperson
destabilization	spokesthing
distribution>strategies	spreadability
enrollment	spreadability>discourse
enrolment>negotiation	spreadability>evidence
familyliteracy	spreadability>masternarrative
genre	spreadability>medium
interessement	stabilization
kid>role	stablemobile
kid>safety	timing
learning	timing>callandresponse
mindset	translation
mobilization	translation>standingsets
network	uptake
oligopticon	

* Coding Format in TAMS: Code**>**Sub-Code

Appendix E2: Coding in TAMS Exemplar



Scrolling list of codes:

- A priori codes
- Emergent codes within case
- Selected emergent codes from across cases

Codes applied to data:

- Interview transcripts
- Fieldnotes
- Research logs
- Memos

Coding format in TAMS:

- Code>Sub-Code>Sub-Sub-Code>Sub-Sub-Sub-Code

Appendix F: Code Sort Exemplar

Screen shot (partial view) of distribution-related codes sorted in spreadsheet for Matt's Bats case:

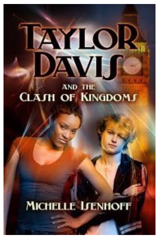
	A	B	C	D	E
1	**Quality Content: News, Interviews, Experiences**	**Name | Logo (Brand | Non-Brand)**	**Promotions: Products & Charity**	**Distribution: Spreadability**	**Distribution: Inscribing Allies**
2	distribution>strategies>content>focused	distribution>strategies>perspective>kid	**distribution>strategies>endorsements>products**	spreadability>directive>tell	distribution>strategies>summoning>name
3	distribution>strategies>content>focused	distribution>strategies>perspective>kid			distribution>strategies>summoning>name
4		distribution>strategies>perspective>kid	distribution>strategies>review	spreadability>discourse>naming>mattsbatsreader	distribution>strategies>summoning>press
5	distribution>strategies>content>quality	distribution>strategies>perspective>kid	distribution>strategies>review	spreadability>discourse>naming>mattsbatsreader	distribution>strategies>summoning>reade
6	distribution>strategies>content>quality	distribution>strategies>originstory>kid	distribution>strategies>review	spreadability>discourse>naming>mattsbatsreader	
7	distribution>strategies>content>quality		distribution>strategies>review		distribution>strategies>connecting>rightpe
8	distribution>strategies>content>quality	distribution>strategies>brand>name>logo	distribution>strategies>review	spreadability>evidence	
9	distribution>strategies>content>quality		distribution>strategies>review	spreadability>evidence	distribution>strategies>twitter>mining>co
10	distribution>strategies>content>quality	distribution>strategies>businesscard		spreadability>evidence>FF	distribution>strategies>twitter>mining>co
11	distribution>strategies>content>quality	distribution>strategies>businesscard	distribution>strategies>review>marketing>contact	spreadability>evidence>FF	distribution>strategies>twitter>mining>co
12	distribution>strategies>content>quality	distribution>strategies>businesscard	distribution>strategies>review>marketing>contact	spreadability>evidence>recap	distribution>strategies>twitter>mining>co
13	distribution>strategies>content>quality	distribution>strategies>businesscard	distribution>strategies>review>request>ARC	spreadability>evidence>recap	distribution>strategies>twitter>mining>co
14	kid>role>writer>audience>quality	distribution>strategies>businesscard	distribution>strategies>interview>reviews>authors	spreadability>evidence>visibility	distribution>strategies>twitter>tagging>co
15	kid>role>writer>audience>quality		distribution>strategies>interview>reviews>authors	spreadability>FF	
16	kid>role>writer>audience>quality	distribution>strategies>logo	distribution>strategies>interview>reviews>authors	spreadability>FF	distribution>strategies>twitter>players
17		distribution>strategies>logo			distribution>strategies>twitter>players>gir
18		distribution>strategies>logo	distribution>strategies>gift	distribution>strategies>contact	distribution>strategies>twitter>recuiting>c
19		distribution>strategies>logo	distribution>strategies>giftguide	distribution>strategies>contact>form	distribution>strategies>twitter>recuiting>c
20	distribution>strategies>interview	distribution>strategies>logo	distribution>strategies>giftguide>solicit>giveaways		distribution>strategies>twitter>recuiting>c
21	distribution>strategies>interview>credential	distribution>strategies>logo>naming	distribution>strategies>giftguide>solicit>giveaways	distribution>strategies>subscription	
22	distribution>strategies>interview>email	distribution>strategies>logo>naming	distribution>strategies>contest>giveaway	distribution>strategies>subscription	distribution>strategies>twitter>curation
23	distribution>strategies>interview>highprofile		distribution>strategies>contest>giveaway	distribution>strategies>subscription	distribution>strategies>twitter>following>
24	distribution>strategies>interview>interest>readers		distribution>strategies>responsive>twitter>giftguide	distribution>strategies>subscription	
25	distribution>strategies>interview>interest>readers	distribution>strategies>slogan	distribution>strategies>affiliation>amazon	distribution>strategies>subscription	artifacting>alllies
26	distribution>strategies>interview>interest>readers	distribution>strategies>slogan	distribution>strategies>twitter>mining>resources>companies	distribution>strategies>subscription	artifacting>alllies
27	distribution>strategies>interview>interest>readers	distribution>strategies>slogan		distribution>strategies>subscription	artifacting>alllies
28	distribution>strategies>interview>interest>readers	distribution>strategies>slogan	distribution>strategies>positive	distribution>strategies>subscription	artifacting>alllies
29	distribution>strategies>interview>interest>readers		distribution>strategies>positive	distribution>strategies>subscription	artifacting>alllies
30	distribution>strategies>interview>media	spokesperson>mattsbats	distribution>strategies>positive	distribution>strategies>subscription	artifacting>alllies>interaction
31	distribution>strategies>interview>reviews>authors	spokesperson>mattsbats	distribution>strategies>positive		artifacting>alllies>interaction
32	distribution>strategies>interview>reviews>authors	spokesperson>mattsbats	distribution>strategies>positive	distribution>strategies>hashtag	artifacting>alllies>interaction
33	distribution>strategies>interview>reviews>authors	spokesperson>mattsbats		distribution>strategies>hashtag	artifacting>alllies>namechecking
34			distribution>strategies>charity	distribution>strategies>hashtag	
35	distribution>strategies>news	tshirting	distribution>strategies>fundraiser	distribution>strategies>hashtag	
36		tshirting	distribution>strategies>fundraiser	distribution>strategies>hashtag	artifacting>allies>autographs
37	distribution>strategies>event>f2f	tshirting	distribution>strategies>fundraiser		artifacting>allies>autographs
38	distribution>strategies>event>f2f>recap	tshirting	distribution>strategies>platform>shared>fans>entertainment>good	originstory	artifacting>alllies>atheletes
39	distribution>strategies>event>f2f>recap	tshirting	*mobilization*	originstory	artifacting>alllies>atheletes

- Codes sorted into themes (columns)
    - Related codes sorted within each theme (clusters)
        - Key groups of codes identified (shaded clusters)

Appendix G: Typical TKRB Book Review

Taylor Davis and the Clash of Kingdoms by Michelle Isenhoff

Let me start the New Year off right with a review of a great book! :D



Taylor Davis and the Clash of Kingdoms
By Michelle Isenhoff
244 pages – ages 9+ (ebook reviewed)
Published by CreateSpace on January 1, 2014

Taylor Davis is back, along with Elena Camila Velasquez Cartahena, and their guardian angels/agents, Mike (short for Amikim) and Ranofur! They need to save the world from chaos and destruction, before a third World War erupts! The team is *sure* that Bartholomew Swain (a horrible pirate who ate a rotten piece of fruit from the Tree of Life who they thought they got rid of in the first book – Taylor Davis and the Flame of Findul – see my review HERE) is behind several hypnotized students, friends of Taylor, who have tried to beat him up, but they have no proof. The trouble isn't just at Taylor's school though. The whole world is going wonky. When the European Union, British Parliament, and the United Nations erupt in violence, Taylor knows something very bad is up. How will he and his team stop it – whatever *it* is?

This was a great second book in the Taylor Davis trilogy. I love how Mrs. Isenhoff writes an exciting adventure appropriate for middle grade kids. The action kept me on the edge of my seat and the story kept me wanting to read more. Taylor and Elena are great characters that I enjoy reading about. I love the mix of angels/villains/humans in the series. Taylor seemed to have changed at the end of the book, more mature, I think, but in a good way. I guess saving the world will do that to a character! I like the sounds (but not the looks) of Simgali the Trickster – very interesting character. Mrs. Isenhoff writing style gave me a great picture of the story without being dragged down with too many details. It made the book enjoyable to read. I could have done without the tad bit of romance (Elena has a boyfriend, and a thing at the end of the book), but that's just me. ;)

I give this book five out of five bookworms!

To learn more about Mrs. Isenhoff and her other books, please click HERE.
To find where to buy Taylor Davis 2 – click HERE.

20 Responses to "Taylor Davis and the Clash of Kingdoms…"

Author's Comment (1-6-14): "Oh, cool! What a great way to start the year. Thanks for the awesome review. Lol, I scaled all romance down to bare bones. I was thinking of you, Erik! :) My boys don't like that sort of thing, either."

> **TKRB's Reply (1-8-14):** "I didn't think M-Man and T-Man would like the romance! ;) It's a great series Mrs. Isenhoff – now get the to thy typewriter (or whatever you use) I want book 3! :D"

Reader's Comment (1-6-14): "I remember rolling my eyes at romance, too! Still do sometimes ;-) Hooray for Michelle and a terrific series!"

> **TKRB's Reply (1-8-14): "**That's what I do! Thanks Mr. [T.]!

Reader's Comment (1-6-14): "Sounds like another great adventure for middle graders. Ms. Isenhoff really writes a good story. I'm glad to hear this is a good sequel to the first Taylor Davis. Glad to hear that middle grade boys aren't interested in the romance in a story. I think middle grade girls may think differently."

> **TKRB's Reply (1-8-14)**: "If they do I don't want to know about it! :D"

Reader's Comment (1-6-14): "The cover seemed a bit mature to me but It does sound like an interesting book from your review. I'll have to check it out. :-)"

> **TKRB's Reply (1-8-14)**: "The kids on the cover do look a bit old, but Mrs. Isenhoff writes for middle-graders and her books are totally clean reads for younger kids. I hope you like it Ms. [B.]!

Reader's Comment (1-6-14): "A great review of an awesome sounding book. A bit of romance doesn't hurt either."

> **TKRB's Reply (1-8-14)**: "*blech* No romance. ;) It is an awesome book and series! :)"
>
> **Reader's Comment (1-9-14)**: "You are too funny."

Reader's Comment (1-6-14): "Harry Potter did fine with a bit of romance, I believe? Sounds like a real thriller!"

> **TKRB's Reply (1-8-14)**: "UGH yes, and they were the very boring slow parts. :P Mrs. Isenhoff does write very exciting stories! Thanks R.! :)"

Reader's Comment (1-7-14): "I have the first Taylor Davis book to read and I am looking forward to it. So glad to hear that you enjoyed the second book just as much. Awesome review. :)"

> **TKRB's Reply (1-8-14)**: "I think you'll like them! :)"

Reader's Comment (1-9-14): "This is a great review, Erik. I had to smile at your dislike for romance, which my own 12 year old seemed to look for in her books. We just read Missed Connections by Sophie Blackall and she was just crazy about that. :)"

> **TKRB's Reply (1-11-14)**: "Oh, I am fine with romance in classics (like Pride and Prejudice), and in some other books, but I am just not a big fan. :)"
>
> **Reader's Comment (1-11-14)**: "It's interesting you mentioned Pride and Prejudice. My daughter just watched the movie adaptation and enjoyed it immensely."
>
> **TKRB's Reply (1-13-14)**: I saw part of a Pride and Prejudice movie (15 minutes of it – my grandpa was channel-surfing). I read an abridged version of it last year. It was pretty good. :)

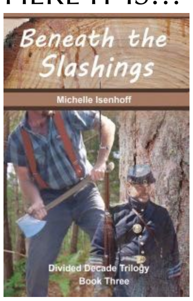
(This Kid Reviews Books, 2014, January 6)

Appendix H: Typical TKRB Book Tour Blog Post with Comments

3…2…1 BOOK LAUNCH! – Beneath The Slashings By Michelle Isenhoff

3…
2..
1…
Mission control we have a book launch!...

I am so EXCITED to be the first stop on a month-long book launch tour for Michelle Isenhoff's newest book – "Beneath The Slashings"! The book officially launched yesterday (August 1st) on Mrs. Isenhoff's blog – Bookworm Blather, (click HERE to go to it)! I've been waiting for the final book in her Divided Decade Trilogy and HERE IT IS…

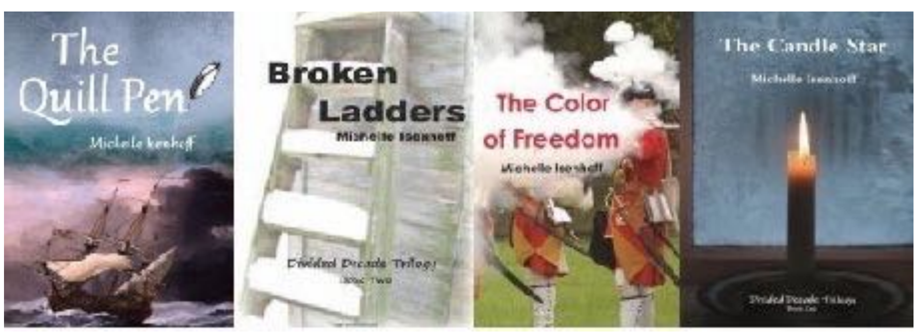


Beneath The Slashings
By Michelle Isenhoff
129 Pages – ages 9+
Published August 1, 2012

Grace was so happy when she heard her Pa was finally coming home from the Civil War! Grace and her brother Sam had been staying with their Aunt and Uncle while their Dad was away. Her happiness soon turned to anger when she found out her Dad sold their farm and was taking them to live on a lumber camp in Michigan. Grace tried reasoning with Pa to not sell the farm, but it didn't work. She grows so angry with her Dad that she stops talking to him. When they arrive at the camp, Grace is less than thrilled. The only people in the camp that Grace likes are Ivan the Russian cook who she and Sam were working for and Johanson, the blacksmith. Grace finally starts to open up and enjoy living at the camp but she still doesn't forgive her Dad. Things in the camp start to fall apart and break down and things start to get dangerous. Grace realizes someone is sabotaging the camp! Grace tries to investigate to try to figure out who is doing the sabotage while also trying to have a better relationship with her Dad. Will Grace uncover the saboteur and finally forgive her Dad? READ THE BOOK TO FIND OUT!!

Beneath The Slashings is the third book in the Divided Decade Trilogy (the first book was "The Candle Star" – click HERE for review and the second book was "Broken Ladders" – click HERE for the review). It isn't a secret that I am a HUGE fan of Mrs. Isenhoff's historical fiction books! I did an interview with her where she told me about how she does the research for her books and her writing process (click HERE to read it). Beneath The Slashings was an exciting and emotional book! The time period it was set in was very interesting. It is in the time just after the civil war (a time in history I haven't read too much about). I liked learning about how some people felt about their relatives and country just after the war. It was also cool to learn about the lumberjacks and their camps. Grace is a great main character. She is nice and thoughtful yet very stubborn. I was surprised to find out that one of the lumberjacks, Jefferson, was related to Malachi (the son of a freed slave), a character in Mrs. Isenhoff's book "The Candle Star". That was a cool connection. I really like how Mrs. Isenhoff adds a lot of detail and lots of action and adventure and makes it totally appropriate for kids. I also like how I learn history from her books. Mrs. Isenhoff also has teaching resources for her books at her website (click HERE).

FIVE OUT OF FIVE BOOKWORMS FOR BENEATH THE SLASHINGS! :D



The blog tour continues for this whole month!

Check out the dates of the rest of the tour!
3 Susan at [this blog/link]
4 Stephanie at [this blog/link]

5 Paige at [this blog/link]
6 Michelle at [this blog/link]

25 Responses to "3…2…1 BOOK LAUNCH!"

[Representative Examples]

Reader's Comment: "Erik, excellent review of Michelle's new book. Now I can't wait to read it. Have read the first two and learned so much about the time period. I ordered the book and should get it soon. I can't wait to read the final book in her trilogy. I love the research she has done. And, I love knowing more about the Civil War impacted the North. Sounds like another great read!"

> **TKRB's Reply**: "Thank you Ms. [T.]! I hope you like the book! It was a great read! :)"

Reader's Comment: "This is another great review. You are right. The time period just after the Civil War is one that isn't flooding libraries with information. It had to be a very difficult time dealing with all the changes and healing from the divisions. This sounds like a wonderful historical novel."

> **TKRB's Reply**: "Thank you Ms. [B.]! You can learn a lot about a couple of time periods in Mrs. Isenhoff's books!"

Author's Comment: "WOW! Erik, you are truly a wonder. You've even convinced ME to go buy the book! :) Thank you for a beautifully done, detailed post. To me, a year's worth of work is so worthwhile if kids can learn a little history and have an enjoyable time doing it. Mission accomplished, Houston!"

Reader's Comment: "What a supercalafragalisticly done review, Eric. (I have owed you a comment since the last Perfect Picture Book Friday.) I have been meaning to get by here, but we had a death in our family. I hope life has been good this summer. I will catch up reading your posts right now. But what a superb review. I love this book and all of Michelle's books. She's just such a terrific writer. That first sentence in Beneath the Slashings got me. It told me I was going to love this book! And love it I did. Hope you had a great vacation. *waves*"

> **TKRB's Reply**: "Thank you Ms. [C.]! I am sorry about the death of the person in your family. :(Mrs. Isenhoff *is* terrific! :D I had a GREAT vacation! Come back tomorrow to read my post about it! :)"

Reader's Comment: "Excellent review! We just reviewed Beneath the Slashings on our blog, too. It was fun to read a review by someone else and nice to see what you liked about the story. Great review and a book that others will certainly enjoy."

> **TKRB's Reply**: "Thank you! I will check out your review and blog! Please stop by again! :)"

(This Kid Reviews Books, 2012)

Appendix I: Typical TKRB Review on Amazon.com

TKRB's Review of *Beneath the Slashings* by Michelle Isenhoff

- Transformed from a review rated with bookworms on TKRB's blog (Appendix H) to a review rated with stars on Amazon.com:

Great Historical Fiction Story!
By This Kid Reviews Books on August 5, 2012
Format: Paperback
Note -I received a free copy of this book in exchange for a fair review.

Grace was so happy when she heard her Pa was finally coming home from the Civil War! Grace and her brother Sam had been staying with their Aunt and Uncle while their Dad was away. Her happiness soon turned to anger when she found out her Dad sold their farm and was taking them to live on a lumber camp in Michigan. Grace tried reasoning with Pa to not sell the farm, but it didn't work. She grows so angry with her Dad that she stops talking to him. When they arrive at the camp, Grace is less than thrilled. The only people in the camp that Grace likes are Ivan the Russian cook who she and Sam were working for and Johanson, the blacksmith. Grace finally starts to open up and enjoy living at the camp but she still doesn't forgive her Dad. Things in the camp start to fall apart and break down and things start to get dangerous. Grace realizes someone is sabotaging the camp! Grace tries to investigate to try to figure out who is doing the sabotage while also trying to have a better relationship with her Dad. Will Grace uncover the saboteur and finally forgive her Dad? READ THE BOOK TO FIND OUT!!

Beneath The Slashings is the third book in the Divided Decade Trilogy (the first book was "The Candle Star" - and the second book was "Broken Ladders"). It isn't a secret that I am a HUGE fan of Mrs. Isenhoff's historical fiction books! Beneath The Slashings was an exciting and emotional book! The time period it was set in was very interesting. It is in the time just after the civil war (a time in history I haven't read too much about). I liked learning about how some people felt about their relatives and country just after the war. It was also cool to learn about the lumberjacks and their camps. Grace is a great main character. She is nice and thoughtful yet very stubborn. I was surprised to find out that one of the lumberjacks, Jefferson, was related to Malachi (the son of a freed slave), a character in Mrs. Isenhoff's book "The Candle Star". That was a cool connection. I really like how Mrs. Isenhoff adds a lot of detail and lots of action and adventure and makes it totally appropriate for kids. I also like how I learn history from her books. Mrs. Isenhoff also has teaching resources for her books at her website.

Comment | Was this review helpful to you? Yes No

- Aggregated with other reviewer ratings on Amazon.com:

("Customer Reviews," 2015)

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